

**WHAT ARE CUSTOMER  
EXPECTATIONS OF AND SATISFACTIONS  
WITH A JAPANESE RESTAURANT IN MINNEAPOLIS?**

**By**

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**ABSTRACT**

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This study examined customer expectations of and satisfactions with a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. Along with customer expectations and satisfactions, the study also investigated demographics and characteristics of restaurant experience of the customers, both of which were analyzed in relation to the customer expectations and satisfaction.

This study will enable Japanese restaurant operators to understand consumer expectations of and satisfaction with their restaurants so they can provide better service for this growing trend towards eating Japanese cuisine in the United States. Improved service can build loyalty and continue to enlarge this section of ethnic food demand.

The data for this study was collected through the use of a survey, which was given in the Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis for three days in May 2003, 19<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 22<sup>nd</sup> (Thursday) and 25<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). The researcher obtained a total of 159 usable surveys, although several participants did not respond to all the questions.

There were an almost equal number of female (52.2%) and male (47.8%) respondents. A typical respondent was between ages 18 – 29 (34.6%), Caucasian (62.8%), bachelor's degree holder (42.0%), currently employed (93.7%), household size of 2 persons (34.6%), annual household income \$100,000 or more (28.6%) and had dined out 5 times or more at a Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months (101 respondents=63.5%).

Results indicated that customers at the Japanese restaurant were expecting and were satisfied in these ways: freshness of the food, cleanliness & hygiene, overall quality of food and pleasant attitude of the employees. These four items out of 13 items in the survey are the most important elements to customer satisfaction.

In addition, it was indicated that Caucasian customers have higher expectations and greater satisfaction with the Japanese restaurant than Asian customers. Thus, Caucasian customers are not only more demanding customers than Asian customers, but also more easily satisfied than Asian customers.

These results and insights from literature explored possible suggestions for the restaurant operators. They will be found in the final chapter.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

The food service business is the most expansive and diverse segment of the hospitality industries. It is also the largest single segment in the hospitality industry. The NRA projected that employment will rise to 12 million by 2006 to meet an annual sales growth rate of 7.6 %. Moreover, this industry produces more than 4 % of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Brymer, 2000).

Eating out has become a way of life for families in this modern society. In recent years, a buoyant economy has given us higher disposable incomes, which allows more meals away from home (Walker & Lundberg, 2001). According to Powers (1995),

Food service is a basic part of the North American way of life. Americans spend nearly half of their food budget (43.5 %) on food away from home. Most of that amount is spent in commercial restaurants. A large percentage of North Americans and roughly half the population eats in a restaurant at least once in any given month (p. 28).

Moreover, people have less time to prepare meals. In fact, NRA indicated that almost half of adult Americans (46 %) are restaurant patrons in a typical day (Brymer, 2000). At the same time, food service customers have become more sophisticated and

more demanding (NRA, 2000a).

People dine out for a variety of reasons: to escape from boredom, to socialize, to avoid drudgery, to be waited on, to have foods different from those served at home, and for convenience (Powers, 1995). “Not long ago, most people socialized at home. Now, however, seven out of ten adults report that dining out with family and friends gives them an opportunity to socialize and is a better use of their leisure time” (NRA, 2000b, p. 13). Moreover, restaurants play a significant role in our lifestyle, and dining out is a favorite social activity (Walker & Lundberg, 2001). Additionally, people also want some adventure in their food. The trend right now is that people are getting a little tired of all the franchises and they are looking for new styles. According to Doug Schmick, co-founder of McCormick & Schmick’s, the Portland, OR chain of upscale seafood restaurants, “ ‘The next generation of customers will be much more sophisticated than what the industry has ever had to cater to in the past. The younger generation are better educated, better traveled, more exposed to cultural influences and their palates are more adventuresome’ ”(Wishna, 2000, p. 27).

Ethnic restaurants often represent the first impression of a particular culture's food to consumers. America’s melting-pot character is reflected in its adopted ethnic cuisines. According to the NRA's latest consumer study (Mills, 2000), *Ethnic Cuisines II*,

the market for ethnic cuisine has grown to such an extent that Italian, Mexican, and Chinese (Cantonese) cuisines have joined the mainstream. Those three cuisines have become so ingrained in American culture that they are no longer considered ethnic. *Ethnic Cuisines II* also revealed six cuisines which have enjoyed significant growth in popularity. Those are Italian, Mexican, Japanese (sushi), Thai, Caribbean, and Middle Eastern.

Japanese cuisine is especially becoming acknowledged because of its health benefits. Powers (1995) stated that there has been a continuing concern about healthy eating because the “baby boomers” are entering middle age. Moreover, as the population continues to age, futurists predict that Americans will consume more healthful foods. “People will be looking for tastier and healthier foods, not just health foods” (Panitz, 2000, p. 16). Diners seeking healthy, tasty alternatives have created a new market for sushi. Sushi has started showing up in health spas, gourmet eateries, markets, and cafeterias (Oetzel, 1998). Japanese cuisine typically has less calories than other cuisines and offers well-balanced nutrition.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem this study addresses is the lack of information regarding customer expectations of and satisfaction with Japanese restaurants. It is difficult to provide the quality customer expectations and satisfactions without this information.

## **Significance**

This research will enable Japanese restaurant operators to understand consumer expectations of and satisfaction with their restaurants so they can provide better service for this growing trend towards eating Japanese cuisine in the United States. Improved service can build loyalty and continue to enlarge this section of ethnic food demand.

Because of the ever-changing characteristics of food service, such as increased competition and consumer expectations, how to create loyal customers is universally deemed an important task for them (Bowen & Chen, 2001). At the same time, consumer interest in and acceptance of ethnic foods continues to grow and reflect the increasing pluralistic composition of contemporary society (NRA, 1989).

Customer expectations regarding value for price paid have also increased. According to the 1999 Tableservice Operator Survey, more than eight out of 10 operators reported that consumers have higher expectations for both quality and consistency of food and service (NRA, 2000a). It is important to go beyond mere satisfaction and become memorable in the eyes of the customers. To be memorable, the restaurant must not only meet customer expectation, the restaurant must exceed them (Marvin, 1997). The need for customer-driven business strategies will increase considerably as the food service industry adjusts to new customer demands and new emerging market conditions (Kivela, Inbakaran

& Reece, 2000).

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the demographic profile of customers who dine at a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis.

2. To identify customer expectations toward the Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis.

3. To examine customer needs and satisfaction with the Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this particular study are the following:

1. The results of the study were determined from a sample of customers in a certain Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. Therefore, the result can only be applied to those who dined in this establishment. Generally, however, the results from this study will likely be applicable for certain additional Japanese restaurants, though not for every individual restaurant.

2. This data was collected for three days in May 2003 19<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 22<sup>nd</sup> (Thursday) and 25<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). Therefore, the results may not represent different times of

the year, or days of the week.

### **Definition of Terms**

**CREST:** “an acronym for Consumer Reports on Eating Share Trends, is an industry-subscriber service that provides consumer-behavior information on the purchase of restaurant-prepared meals and snacks. CREST methodology involves the daily collection of purchase behavior data from a balanced online panel, which totals 52,500 individuals per month. Each participant reports information about "yesterday's" meals or snacks that were prepared outside the home” (Ebbin, 2002b, August, n.p.).

**National Restaurant Association (NRA):** The NRA, begun in 1919, is a key leading business association in the restaurant industry



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review related theories and existing studies which are necessary for an examination of consumer expectations and satisfaction with Japanese restaurants. This chapter will include a discussion of the food service industry, followed by a section on ethnic cuisine, Japanese cuisine and the health conscious consumer. In addition, it will discuss consumer motivation, followed by a section on consumer behavior and consumer satisfaction.

#### **Food Service Industry**

According to Chang who studied food in the Chinese culture from the anthropological and historical point of view, "To say that the food supply was the most important factor in the evolution of man is to state the obvious, but occasionally we fail to realize that eating is more than vital just for human survival it is an activity by which culture can be distinguished" (Hegarty & O'Mahony, 2001, p.3).

The food service industry is defined in its broadest sense to mean all establishments where food is regularly served away from home. Such establishments include formal restaurants, hotels or motels, coffee shops, family restaurants, specialty and

ethnic restaurants, and fast-food outlets (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994).

As society continues to globalize, restaurants are becoming an essential part of daily life. According to NRA's *2003 Restaurant Industry Forecast*, restaurant industry sales are expected to reach a record \$426.1 billion in 2003, up 4.5 % over 2002 (NRA, 2003a). Mills (2000) stated that "people are spending more than a billion a day eating out, and the NRA expects that trend to continue. Restaurant sales have grown from \$239 billion in 1990 to \$376 billion in 2000, and are expected to reach \$577 billion in 2010"(n. p.).

The growth in patronage of food services may be attributed in part to socioeconomic trends and other demographic changes. For example, the changing status of women has had an influence on the work force. In 1970, approximately only 43% of women over 16 years old were working; today, two-thirds of industry's employees are women (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994). Another factor influencing the food service industry is the increasing number of single-person households and the potential for people living alone to eat out. They tend to spend a larger amount of their food budget on meals away from home than do family groups (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994).

Moreover, according to the NRA's *Restaurant Spending 2000*(Ebbin, 2002a), the typical American household spent an average of \$2,137 on food away from home in

2000. The Midwest led all four census regions in expenditures with \$2,322 per household or \$929 per capita. The data indicated that households in metropolitan areas tended to spend more on food away from home than households located in non-metropolitan areas. Household spending on food away from home is strongly influenced by a variety of demographic characteristics, of which household income is one of the most significant factors. Expenditures on food away from home increased dramatically for households with income before taxes of \$30,000 or more.

In addition, the age of the household head is another important demographic characteristic influencing restaurant spending. Households headed by persons under age 25 spent 48.8 % of their total food budget on food away from home more than any other age group; consumers at this age are usually beginning their careers and usually earn less than older consumers. As a result, although they spent the largest share of their food dollar on food away from home, total spending on food away from home by these households was well below the nation's average for all households. On the other hand, adults between the ages of 35 and 54 are in the prime of their earning potential and their higher incomes result in higher spending on food away from home. However, adults age 35 to 44 also are in their prime child-raising years. As a result, although these households spent the

second-largest total amount on food away from home, their higher average household size (3.2 persons) brought their per-capita restaurant spending down.

Furthermore, occupation is also an important demographic characteristic influencing restaurant spending. Persons employed in managerial and professional occupations posted the highest total and per-capita spending on food away from home (\$3,090 and \$1,188). Managers and professionals allocated the highest proportion of their total food expense to food away from home (47.6 %). Self-employed persons, technical, mechanics, sales, clerical and construction workers also posted above-average total expenditures on food away from home (Ebbin, 2002a).

According to the latest CREST report (Ebbin, 2002b), the food service industry traffic gained 1 percent during the spring quarter of 2002 (March through May). The average per-person checks increased 2 percent during the spring quarter. Higher-check upscale restaurants also increased 5 percent to \$29.18 in average check size. Average check size increased 3 percent to \$7.44 at midscale restaurants. Quick-service and casual-dining restaurants each recorded increases of 2 percent to \$4.42 and \$11.16, respectively. These indicate that the food service industry has continued to grow.

Furthermore, recent NRA research (2000a) indicated that two out of five adults (42%) reported that they were cooking fewer meals at home than they were two years ago.

On an average day in 1998, 21 percent of U.S. households used some form of takeout or delivery, and almost half of all adults were restaurant patrons on a typical day. More than two out of three adults (68%) agree that going out to a restaurant with family and/or friends gave them an opportunity to socialize and was the preferred way to use their leisure time rather than cooking and cleaning up. Over half of the consumers (56%) reported that they were not entertaining at home as often as they had been two years ago. In addition, “Half the adults say that their favorite restaurant foods have flavor and taste sensations not easily duplicated at home” (NRA, 2000b, p. 13).

More than 8 million people are employed in the food service industry in the United States, which is more than three times the number of persons who work in automobile and steel manufacturing companies (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994, p. 3). The food service industry produces more than four percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and offers tremendous job opportunities (Brymer, 2000).

### **Ethnic Cuisine**

The food service industry is complex, fast-growing, and ever-changing. Many factors affect its growth and status, such as socioeconomic conditions, demographic shifts, and changing food habits and desires of the American people (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994). Ethnic restaurants often represent the first impression of a

particular culture's food to consumers. The NRA's *Ethnic Cuisines I*, an analysis of the Association's second nationwide survey asking consumers about their ethnic cuisine experiences, revealed which ethnic cuisines have become mainstream and which are gaining in popularity (Mills, 2000). Senior vice president of the Research and Information Service Division for the NRA, Riehle said,

The rise in awareness and popularity of ethnic cuisines in the United States can be attributed to the diverse immigration into the country. As ethnic groups grow, that trend is reflected in the number of restaurants that offer a taste of home, again demonstrating that restaurants are the gateways to other cultures (Mills, 2000, n. p.).

Americans' interest in international cuisine should come as no surprise, since demographically, the United States is more diverse today than ever before, and cuisines of minority populations are making a bigger impact on the tastes of the nation (NRA, 2000a). America's melting-pot character is reflected in its adopted ethnic cuisines.

According to the NRA's latest consumer study (Mills, 2000), *Ethnic Cuisines II*, the market for ethnic cuisine has grown to such an extent that Italian, Mexican, and Chinese (Cantonese) cuisines have joined the mainstream. Those three cuisines have become so ingrained in American culture that they are no longer considered ethnic. A

study of food ethnicity by Bell et al. (cited in Johns & Pine, 2002, p.125) found that “temporarily adding an Italian theme to menus and décor not only increased consumers’ perceptions of restaurant ethnicity, but also raised overall perceptions of food quality and the meal experience.”

*Ethnic Cuisines II* also revealed six cuisines which have enjoyed a significant growth in popularity. Those are Italian, Mexican, Japanese (sushi), Thai, Caribbean, and Middle Eastern. In contrast, French, German, Scandinavian, and Soul Food showed a decline in popularity (Mills, 2000).

The leading demographic population of ethnic cuisine dining are the generations X and Y (ages 18 to 34). They are far more likely to frequent varied, more unique food restaurants compared to the older consumer. They have been exposed to various ethnic cuisines at an early age, thanks to their parents. On the other hand, *Ethnic Cuisines II* indicated older singles or married seniors do not frequent these establishments while younger consumers frequently visit a variety of restaurants. According to the study, if older individuals are to venture into the realm of ethnic cuisine, they are far more likely to select Italian, Mexican and Cantonese-Chinese, which are well known as ethnic “Mainstream” (Nolt & Foulkes, 2000).

## **Japanese Cuisine**

Japanese cuisine, especially “sushi”, made its first big splash in the United States in the 1980s. Adventurous American diners became enamored with the exotic look and taste of sushi. The "California Roll" was born and sushi bars opened in urban locales across the nation (Oetzel, 1998). In the last five years of the 1990s, sushi consumption grew by 40 percent (Walkup, 2003). However, these developments are just a recent addition to the long sushi history.

Around 2000 years ago the Japanese began preserving fish by salting it and packing it in rice. The rice was later discarded and only the fish eaten. Methods of fermentation evolved and vinegar was introduced to the rice. In time people developed a taste for both the raw fish and the vinegared rice. Sushi is basically seafood laid on top of cooked vinegared rice. Nigiri-Sushi is perhaps the best known. It originated in Tokyo in the 1800's. Sushi is widely recognized as a low calorie health food. In fact, the seafood ingredients used for the toppings and fillings contain a lot of nutrients. Tuna for example, is good for counteracting fatigue, and preventing brittle bone disease; octopus is effective in preventing arteriosclerosis and high blood pressure; and shellfish have been found to be beneficial in preventing anaemia and calming the nerves. Salmon roe is useful in



alleviating various skin problems (Rollinson , 2001, p.3).

According to Utagawa, an owner of a Japanese restaurant in Washington, DC, "The American passion for sushi has matured into a more committed relationship. We used to get people who came to our restaurant to ask, is it really raw fish? But we do not see those people anymore. We have families who come and bring the kids with them. Kids love sushi" (Oetzel, 1998, n. p.). In addition, being able to watch a restaurant's sushi chefs at work at a sushi bar is an attraction in itself. Customers can enjoy the frenetic style in which chefs prepare their sushi orders in full view (Walkup, 2003).

Many sushi restaurants in the United States offer nontraditional sushi. The most common kind of sushi in Japan is nigiri-sushi, a hand-shaped mound of rice topped with a select piece of fish. In the United States, however, the popularity of seaweed-wrapped sushi, or maki-sushi, has led to a distinctly American style of sushi making. In addition to the famous "California Roll" (usually a combination of avocado, cucumber, and crab surimi formed fish pulp), sushi menus in the States often feature some unique variation, such as the "Philadelphia Roll" (smoked salmon, cucumber, and cream cheese) and the roll supposedly invented by Mick Jagger, the "Rock'n Roll" (avocado and grilled eel) (Oetzel, 1998). Moreover, most Americans associate sushi with raw fish, but the foundation of sushi is actually seasoned rice, not seafood. Making and shaping

high-quality sushi rice is considered an art in Japan, where chefs study for four or five years to become sushi masters. In the Japanese tradition, an ideal piece of sushi balances rice with an artful arrangement of other elements, which might include cooked fish, raw fish, shellfish, or vegetables, plus a dab of Japanese horseradish, called wasabi (Oetzels, 1998).

As sushi and sashimi bars proliferate across America, more non-Japanese restaurants are getting in on the action by adding raw fish to their menus. Many restaurants that primarily are known for an American or European-influenced cuisine have seen their sales of Japanese-style raw fish offerings skyrocket since they were added to menus (Walkup, 2003). According to Phillip Yi, director of the California Sushi Academy in the Los Angeles, “We are getting phone calls from a lot of restaurant owners and chefs from all over the United States and the world who are looking to incorporate sushi into their menus” (Cited in Walkup, 2003, p.8.).

Conversely, American-style sushi is a draw for Japanese tourists. According to manager Jess Park at Nikko’s restaurant in Seattle,

The Japanese tourists who stay in the hotel are fascinated by creative selections like the "Nikko Roll," made from seven different pieces of fish rolled with avocado and rice. (Originally made by this restaurant) A lot of Japanese are going

crazy for these things, especially the rolls, which they cannot get in Japan. (Oetzel, 1998, n. p.)

Diners seeking healthy, tasty alternatives have created a new market for sushi.

Sushi has started showing up in health spas, gourmet eateries, markets, and cafeterias. It is even available at some Costco wholesale warehouse locations, Target, as well as at the upscale market Dean & DeLuca in New York (Oetzel, 1998). These show how sushi is adopted as a popular daily take-out food item.

### **Health Conscious Consumer**

Powers (1995) stated that there has been a continuing concern about healthy eating because the “baby boomers” are entering middle age. Moreover, as the population continues to age, futurists predict that Americans will consume more healthful foods. Much research is being conducted and reported by the media concerning the impact of nutrition on health. People are becoming generally more knowledgeable about nutrition and food safety (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994). “People will be looking for tastier and healthier foods, not just health foods” (Panitz, 2000, p. 16). According to Iwamuro (1993), the NRA conducted a nationwide survey to assess consumer attitudes toward health and nutrition in 1992. The survey used a framework with segments which included unconcerned patrons, committed patrons and vacillating patrons. Committed

patrons consists of individuals who believe that a good diet plays a role in the prevention of serious illness and are committed to good nutrition when eating away from home. The survey revealed that committed patronage has increased by nearly 8 million persons since the first survey was conducted in 1986.

The survey also discovered that two-thirds of adults overall reported restricting their diets in the previous year to maintain health. Moreover, nearly three out of four respondents (71 percent) reported consciously restricting their consumption of foods high in fat, while 64 percent restrict their intake of foods high in cholesterol, but consumers are least likely to restrict their consumption of poultry (10 percent) or fish/seafood (17 percent) – not surprising given the reputation of these items as being relatively low in fat and calories.

At this point, Japanese cuisine is a perfect diet for these committed patrons, because it is low in fat and calories. Moreover, 22 percent of adults in this study describe themselves as either a vegetarian (6 percent) or almost a vegetarian (16 percent). Since Japanese cuisine is famous for its vegetarian choices such as vegetable tempura (variety of deep fried vegetables) or tofu dishes, this cuisine is perfect for the vegetarian consumer.

However, only 41 percent of consumers believe that it is easy to eat healthy at most table service restaurants (Iwamuro, 1993). Iwamuro (1993) recommends that

restaurants need to do more to accommodate consumers' health and nutrition concerns. For example, 78 percent of adults think that restaurants ought to offer different size portions for different size appetites, while 64 percent wish that more restaurants offered menu items for health-conscious customers.

### **Consumer Motivation**

People dine out for a variety of reasons including: to relieve boredom, to socialize, to avoid drudgery, to be waited on, to have foods different from those served at home, and for convenience (Powers, 1995). The latest trends in the outlook for full service restaurants from the NRA (2000b) restaurant industry forecast indicated that due to the rising incomes and growing financial prosperity of the late 1990s, moderately priced restaurants, especially casual-dining places, have proliferated as diners' appetites for more sophisticated tastes and flavors have grown. Taking these rising demands into account, operators are paying more attention to the overall dining experience. In the mean time, atmosphere or ambiance is a major deciding factor when people go out to restaurants (Marvin, 1992).

Finkelstein, who studied dining experience from the sociological point of view, echoed these sentiments,

In our society, much of dining out has to do with self-presentation, through

images of what is currently valued, accepted and fashionable. The restaurant is ...a place where we experience excitement, pleasure and a sense of personal well-being ...The images of wealth, happiness, luxury and pleasant social relations ...are iconically represented through its ambience, décor, furnishings, lighting, tableware and so on. These are in turn dominated by fashion [and] distinct waves of style (Johns & Pine, 2002, p.128).

Moreover, atmosphere is a very important criteria especially for the special occasion diner. Collison and Turner (cited in Johns & Pine, 2002), who studied consumer acceptance of meals and meal components, reported that ordinary food was the dominant factor in the quality of everyday meal experience, but for “special” meals, such as Christmas dinner, environment and atmosphere are more important.

Customer expectations regarding value for price paid have also increased recently, according to the 1999 Tableservice Operator Survey. More than eight out of 10 operators reported that consumers have higher expectations for both quality and consistency of food and service. Not only fine-dining operators, but also more than half of family-restaurant operators have noticed an increase in customer expectations in areas like freshness of ingredients, pace of service, and plate presentation (NRA, 2000a). The need for customer-driven business strategies will increase considerably as the food service

industry adjusts to new customer demands and emerging market conditions (Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece, 2000).

On the other hand, *Ethnic Cuisines II* revealed that cuisines have different profiles. Some are seen by consumers as exotic or innovative, but others aren't. Moreover, *Ethnic Cuisines II* revealed certain themes or patterns of appeal (Mills, 2000). These are examples of patterns of appeal:

**Basic Family** appeal represents the "safe" core of the ethnic-cuisines market — traditional Italian, basic Mexican and Cantonese Chinese — that appeals to almost all consumers. Those cuisines are highly familiar and are perceived as a great value for the price, good for eating out with children and good for carryout. Thus, they are chosen regularly by consumers.

**Authentic & Mild** appeal is especially represented by Japanese cuisines — sushi and other dishes — and secondarily by Middle Eastern cuisine. Younger, upscale consumers are most interested in those types of foods. In terms of perceptions only, authentic restaurants do a really good job of preparing those types of foods; mild, pleasant flavors and beautiful presentations characterize the food. Moreover, those cuisines are difficult to prepare at home.

## **Consumer Behavior**

The study of consumer behavior may deal with all of the ways people act as consumers, but in practice tends to focus on behavior related to searching, buying and using products and services (Johns & Pine, 2002). The food service industry is different from other areas of the service sector like financial and professional services (Johns & Pine, 2002). It is closely concerned with food choice and quality and offers a rich meal experience to which many factors contribute.

An interesting study of consumer behavior was conducted by Tse, Sin & Yim (2002). They found that when consumers perceive a restaurant as very crowded, they would attribute the high level of crowdedness to high food quality, good reputation and low food prices that draw people to the restaurant. On the contrary, in the case of a quiet restaurant, the customer would associate the quietness with low food quality, high food prices and poor reputation.

Since the 1970s clear theoretical structures have shaped consumer research.

These include:

**Attribute-value theory** consumers are believed to view a service such as a restaurant meal in terms of a set of attributes, i.e., characteristics that make it desirable, ascribing different levels of importance to each attribute. For example,



one market segment may be attracted by a restaurant's low price, another by its food quality, another by its convenient location, and so on. Consumers weigh the overall value of an offering in terms of the degree to which each attribute is present and the importance they see the attribute as having.

**Expectancy disconfirmation theory** an overall evaluation which produces an attitude towards a restaurant which may be one of two types: a pre-experience attitude (expectation), or a post-experience performance evaluation. A further theoretical refinement considers that consumers gauge their experience according to how well actual performance confirms or disconfirms their expectations.

During the 1980s, Parasuraman et al. (cited in Johns & Pine, 2002) studied measuring customer perceptions of service quality and made a major contribution to consumer research in service industries with the SERVQUAL instrument. It uses 26 standardized questions to measure generalized service attributes that are considered relevant to all service industries. Parasuraman et al. demonstrated that their 26 items could be consistently reduced into five service dimensions: *reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles* (p.122).

## **Consumer Satisfaction**

Food service is not a factory manufacturing meals but it is custom retailers (Muller, 1999). It is important to go beyond mere satisfaction and become memorable in the eyes of the customers. To be memorable, the restaurant must not only meet customer expectations, the restaurant must exceed them (Marvin, 1997).

No matter how exotic or familiar the cuisine, today's consumer desires a good overall restaurant experience. Friendly, attentive service, tasty food, and a decent atmosphere are just as critical to the success of an ethnic restaurant as they are to any establishment (Mills, 2000).

“Many empirical studies reconfirm the importance of food quality, and also show that customers see service as just one of several factors affecting the quality of restaurant offerings. Consumer satisfaction can be based upon a totality of attributes, including both food and services” (Johns & Pine, 2002, p.123).

In their analysis of food service research, Johns and Pine (2002) concluded that consumer satisfaction is concerned not only with attribute values, but also with broader value systems. The following are some of the findings and observations in their article:

- Consumer involvement (i.e. the importance of the choice to the individual at the time

of purchase) is a significant factor affecting restaurant customers' satisfaction.

Consumer satisfaction is also related to cultures through values.

- US and Hong Kong students had very different expectations of restaurant service. The Asians valued respect, unobtrusive helpfulness and personal cleanliness, while US students required eye contact, personalization and product knowledge.
- Korean college students evaluated restaurants in order: fine dining > quick service > family style, but their pattern of use showed the opposite order of preference.
- Ways in which company values (i.e. corporate culture) influence customer satisfaction.

Several scholars have studied the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase. Pettijohn et al. (cited in Johns & Pine, 2002) measured customer satisfaction using empirical attributes, finding that satisfied customers had a significantly higher intention of returning. Bowen & Chen (2001) studied the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. Loyal customers spread positive word-of-mouth and make recommendations to others. Creating loyal customers is critical for hospitality operators. Their study verified that having satisfied customers is not sufficient to create loyalty; hospitality operators must have extremely satisfied customers. Furthermore, the

study shows a small increase in customer satisfaction boosted customer loyalty dramatically. In addition to benefiting from the extremely satisfied customers' repeat patronage, hospitality operators can save their marketing expenses because of the extreme satisfied customers' marketing power. Therefore, hospitality operators should not be content with having satisfied customers. They need customers who are very satisfied.

### **Summary**

Related literature reviewed how the food service industry is growing in this modern society. In fact, food service industry sales are expected to reach a record \$426.1 billion in 2003, up 4.5 percent over 2002. In the U.S.A., more and more people are consuming food away from home every year. At the same time, ethnic cuisines have become mainstream and are gaining in popularity, not only mainstream ethnic cuisines such as Italian, Mexican, and Chinese (Cantonese) cuisines, but also Japanese cuisine.

Japanese cuisine is becoming acknowledged because of its healthiness. There has been a continuing concern about healthy eating. Consumers are seeking tastier and healthier foods, not just health foods, Japanese cuisine fills these needs because it has less calories than other cuisines and contains well-balanced nutrition.

Today's consumers have higher expectations for both quality and consistency of food and service. The need for customer-driven strategies will increase considerably as the

food service industry adjusts to new customer demands and emerging market conditions. It is also important that food service operators need customers who are extremely satisfied not just satisfied, because extremely satisfied customers have a significantly higher intention of returning. Creating loyal customers is critical for food service operators.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The intention of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology of the study. This chapter includes a description of the sample and the instruments being used. In addition, data collection and data analysis procedures are given. The chapter concludes with the methodological limitations.

#### **Subject Selection and Description**

The population for this study was the customers of a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. This restaurant was a full-service restaurant and its seating capacity was 100 per sitting. A full-service restaurant is a food service establishment which provides waiter/waitress service to a seated clientele (Brymer, 2000). According to Hemmington (1999), there are many approaches for selecting the samples, but they can be divided into two categories: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. He addressed that “in non-probability sampling the elements have an unknown probability of being selected and selection is usually based on the researcher’s judgment and expertise” (p.250). Moreover, Hemmington indicated that there are five samplings in non-probability sampling. These are convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and

theoretical sampling. Convenience sampling is based on the collection of data from those who are readily available for investigation (Hemmington, 1999). Following this theory, the sample was selected by convenience sampling of customers of a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis.

The restaurant owner and manager were initially contacted and they approved the study. The researcher decided on a sample size of 150 surveys (approximately, 50 surveys each day). Lunch and dinner numbers were approximately equal. The researcher stayed at the restaurant during the whole lunch and dinner hours for three days. In order to collect 50 well-balanced surveys for each day, researcher carefully paid attention to the size of the party and selected equal numbers of small and large groups before she approached the customers. The customers were asked to fill out the surveys during their stay in the restaurant. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study was a three page, 14-item, self-administered questionnaire (Appendix A) which examines respondents' expectations of and satisfaction with a Japanese restaurant and its demographic profile. It includes multiple choices, yes/no questions, five Likert items and open-ended questions. The survey is comprised of five

parts: 1) demographic data (gender, age, education background, occupation, household size, annual household income and ethnic background), 2) the characteristics of the restaurant experiences (number of Japanese restaurant experiences and reasons for dining out), 3) the desirable characteristics of a Japanese restaurant, using a Likert scale, 4) the satisfaction with a Japanese restaurant, using a Likert scale, and 5) open-ended questions.

Since none of the instruments found met the specific needs of this study, an original survey was designed. Because it was constructed specifically for this study, there are no measures of validity or reliability conducted on the instrument. However, this survey is modeled after a plan A thesis in the department of Hospitality and Tourism, University of Wisconsin-Stout, conducted in 2000, “ Factors that influence the decision of patrons to dine at selected Indian restaurants in the Twin cities” by Prema A. Monteiro. In her paper, she cites three sources on which she based her survey: the NRA ‘Customer Attitude Questionnaire’ by Reid (1983), a plan A thesis in the department of Hospitality and Tourism, University of Wisconsin-Stout “The Perceptions, Motivations and Preferences of Traditional College Students toward Chinese and American Restaurants” by Duangkamol Govivatana (1999), and an article “Determinant Factors and Choice Intention for Chinese Restaurant Dining: A Multivariate Approach” by Haillin Qu (1997).

In addition, a pilot test was conducted with customers who dine in a Japanese



restaurant, to verify the survey's accuracy and ease of understanding, and to further refine the questionnaire. The approximate time required for completing the questionnaire was five to six minutes.

The first part (Q1-Q7) was designed to collect respondents' demographic information including gender (Q1), age (Q2), education background (Q3), occupation (Q4), household size (Q5), annual household income (Q6) and ethnic background (Q7). In all the questions, respondents were asked to choose the appropriate answer from multiple choices.

The second part (Q8 and Q10) was designed to collect respondents' information about restaurant experience characteristics such as number of Japanese restaurant experience (Q8) and reasons for dining out (Q10). In question 8, respondents were asked to choose Yes or No for the question, "Is this your first time trying Japanese cuisine?" If respondents answered Yes, they were asked to skip to question 9. If respondents answered No, they were asked to choose the appropriate answer from multiple choices for the question, "How often have you dined at Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months?" In question 10, respondents were asked to choose the appropriate answer from multiple choices.

The third part (Q9) was designed to define the desirable characteristics of a Japanese restaurant. In question nine 13 items which relate to desirable characteristics of a

Japanese restaurant were listed, and respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they desired each of the items on a five-point Likert scale (1=extremely undesirable, 2=somewhat undesirable, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat desirable, 5=extremely desirable). Thirteen desirable characteristics were as follows: a. uniqueness of the food, b. healthiness of the food, c. food presentation, d. overall quality of the food, e. freshness of the food, f. unable to prepare at home, g. pleasant attitude of the employees, h. efficiency of service, i. cleanliness & hygiene, j. interior or décor, k. variety of menu, l. value for price and m. different cultural experience.

The fourth part (Q11) was designed to measure the satisfaction with a Japanese restaurant. Question 9 included thirteen items which relate to satisfaction with a Japanese restaurant, and respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they were satisfied with each of the items on a five-point Likert scale (1=extremely undesirable, 2=somewhat undesirable, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat desirable, 5=extremely desirable). The thirteen satisfaction items were as follows: a. uniqueness of the food, b. healthiness of the food, c. food presentation, d. overall quality of the food, e. freshness of the food, f. unable to prepare at home, g. pleasant attitude of the employees, h. efficiency of service, i. cleanliness & hygiene, j. interior or décor, k. variety of menu, l. value for price and m. different cultural experience.

The last part (Q12-Q13) was designed to collect respondents' candid comments about positive and negative feelings about Japanese restaurants (in general).

### **Data Collection**

The data was collected through the use of a survey for three days in May 2003 19<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 22<sup>nd</sup> (Thursday) and 25<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). Prior to data collection, the researcher visited the restaurant and spoke to the owner and manager to present the proposal and obtain consent to carry out the survey. The researcher obtained 159 completed surveys in three days.

The survey was given to the customers who dine at the Japanese restaurant during the lunch and dinner hours. The researcher introduced herself to the participants before explaining the purpose of the study. The participants were informed that the survey is voluntary. The researcher assured the participants that their identity will not be revealed and everything in the questionnaire will remain confidential. Then the researcher left the customers to complete their survey in private. The questionnaire was collected once the customers finished their meal and left the table.

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this particular study are the following:

1. The results of the study were determined from a sample of customers in a certain Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. Therefore, the result can only be generalized to those who dined in this establishment. Generally, however, the results from this study will likely be applicable for certain additional Japanese restaurants; though not for every individual restaurant.

2. This data was collected for three days in May 2003 19<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 22<sup>nd</sup> (Thursday) and 25<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). Therefore, the results may not represent different times of the year, or days of the week.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter four presents the analysis of data collected by the method described in chapter three. The researcher employed the questionnaire to collect the data. The SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) software package analyzed and computed all data except the two open-ended questions. This chapter will include rate of response, analysis of demographics and characteristics of restaurant experiences, analysis of desirable characteristics and satisfaction characteristics with Japanese restaurant and analysis of responses to the two open-ended questions.

#### **Rate of Response**

There were a total of 159 usable surveys, although several participants did not respond to all the questions. Data was collected almost equally, each day Monday, Thursday and Sunday. In the total data of 159, fifty-five surveys (34.6%) were from Monday (19<sup>th</sup> May), fifty surveys (31.4%) were from Thursday (22<sup>nd</sup> May) and fifty-four surveys (34.0%) were from Sunday (25<sup>th</sup> May). The data collected included 72 surveys for lunch (45.3%) and 87 surveys for dinner (54.7%). Data was analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) software package.

### **Analysis of Demographic and Characteristics of Restaurant Experience**

Respondents were asked to indicate their demographic data and restaurant experience information in question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10. Answers to all the items except question 8 were multiple choice. In question 8 “number of Japanese restaurant experiences”, respondents were asked to choose Yes or No for the question, “Is this your first time trying Japanese cuisine?” If respondents answered Yes, they were asked to skip to question 9. If respondents answered No, they were asked to choose an appropriate answer from multiple choices for the question, “ How often have you dined at a Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months?” Therefore, all the items on demographics and restaurant experience yielded data at the nominal scale of measurement. Frequency distribution and percentage were computed.

Gender. In the total of 159 respondents, 52.2% were female (83 respondents), and 47.8% were male (76 respondents), as shown in Table 1.

Age. Table 2 reports the age distribution of respondents. In the total 159 respondents, those who are 18 - 29 years old accounted for 34.6%, 30 – 39 years old 25.2%, 40 – 49 years old 20.8%, 50 – 59 years old 12.6%, 60 – 69 years old 5% and 70 or older 1.9%.

Table 1: Gender


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Gender	N	%
Female	83	52.2
Male	76	47.8
Total	159	100.0

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Table 2: Age


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Age categories	N	%
18-29 years old	55	34.6
30-39 years old	40	25.2
40-49 years old	33	20.8
50-59 years old	20	12.6
60-69 years old	8	5.0
70 or older	3	1.9
Total	159	100.0

---

*Educational background.* Table 3 below shows the educational background of respondents.

In the 157 respondents, those who have a Bachelor’s degree were 42% (66 respondents), while those who have a Master’s degree or higher were 35.8% (57 respondents).

Table 3: Educational background

Education level	N	%
Up to high school	15	9.6
Associate degree/vocational technical training	19	12.1
Bachelor’s degree	66	42.0
Master’s degree or higher	57	36.3
Total	157	100.0

*Occupation.* Table 4 reports the occupation of the respondents. In the 158 respondents, those who are “professional” such as doctor or lawyer were 20.3% (32 respondents), while those who are “student” were 19% (30 respondents). “other” included engineer, artist, musician, chef, police and military at 19% (30 respondents).



Table 4: Occupation

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Occupation	N	%
Professional	32	20.3
Managerial	16	10.1
Office worker	16	10.1
Teacher/Professor	13	8.2
Homemaker	7	4.4
Student	30	19.0
Entrepreneur	11	7.0
Retiree	3	1.9
Other	30	19.0
Total	158	100.0

---

Household size. Table 5 shows the household size of respondents. More than half of the respondents are living alone or with another person. In the 156 total respondents, the most frequent response was “ 2 persons” which was 34.6 % (54 respondents) followed by “ 1 person” which was 24.4% (38 respondents).

Table 5: Household size

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Household size	N	%
1 person	38	24.4
2 persons	54	34.6
3 persons	25	16.0
4 persons	28	17.9
5 persons or more	11	7.1
Total	156	100.0

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Annual household income. Table 6 reports respondents' annual household income. Nearly 50 % of the 140 respondents had an annual household income of \$70,000 or more. About 28% indicated "\$100,000 or more". An income of \$24,999 or less accounted for 18.6%.

Nineteen respondents did not provide this income information.

Table 6: Annual household income

Annual household income	N	%
\$24,999 or less	26	18.6
\$25,000-\$39,999	15	10.7
\$40,000-\$54,999	12	8.6
\$55,000-\$69,999	18	12.9
\$70,000-\$84,999	13	9.3
\$85,000-\$99,999	16	11.4
\$100,000 or more	40	28.6
Total	140	100.0

*Ethnic background.* Table 7 shows the ethnic background of respondents. In the 156 responses, 62.8% were “Caucasian”(98 respondents), 26.3% were “Asian”(41 respondents), 5.1% were “African American”, and 3.8% were “Multi-racial. Only one respondent (0.6%) was “Hispanic”.

Table 7: Ethnic background

Ethnic categories	N	%
Caucasian	98	62.8
African American	8	5.1
Hispanic	1	.6
Asian	41	26.3
Multi-racial	6	3.8
Other	2	1.3
Total	156	100.0

Number of Japanese restaurant experiences. Tables 8 and 9 report the number of Japanese restaurant experiences. Of the 159 respondents, the majority of (96.2%) answered “No” to the question “ Is this your first time trying Japanese cuisine?” Only 6 respondents (3.8%) indicated that this is their first time trying Japanese cuisine.

Over 65 % answered that they had dined 5 times or more at a Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months. Nearly 97% of respondents answered that they had dined at least 1 time at Japanese restaurants during the past 12 months. Thus, the majority of respondents were repeat diners at Japanese restaurants.

Table 8: First time trying Japanese cuisine?

	N	%
Yes	6	3.8
No	153	96.2
Total	159	100.0

Table 9: Number of Japanese restaurant experiences during past 12 months

Number of experiences	N	%
0 times	5	3.3
1 time	10	6.6
2 times	10	6.6
3 times	13	8.6
4 times	13	8.6
5 times or more	101	66.4
Total	152	100.0

*Reasons for dining out.* Table 10 below shows the reason for dining out. In the total respondents of 159, over half of participants (55.3%) indicated “Regular dining”. “Special occasion” were 16.4%, while “Business” were 13.8%. The reasons for “Other” were such as “visiting family or friends in the Twin cities (6 respondents), “Bad weather (i.e. raining) (3 respondents)” and so on.

Table 10: Reason for dining out

Reason	N	%
Regular dining	88	55.3
Business	22	13.8
Special occasion	26	16.4
Other	23	14.5
Total	159	100.0

### **Analysis of Desirable Characteristics and Satisfaction Characteristics**

Items on desirable characteristics and satisfaction characteristic were measured on five-point Likert scale of desirability (1=Extremely undesirable, 5=Extremely desirable), and extent (1=Extremely unsatisfied, 5=Extremely satisfied) for satisfaction, creating data at the interval scale of measurement. The 13 characteristics of the Japanese restaurant were as follows: uniqueness of the food, healthiness of the food, food presentation, overall quality of the food, freshness of the food, unable to prepare at home, pleasant attitude of the employees, efficiency of service, cleanliness & hygiene, interior or décor, variety of menu, value for price and different cultural experience. Mean scores was computed for each item, One-way Anova and T-test analysis were used to identify significant relationships among those items and 3 important variables in demographics, which are Gender (female and male), Ethnic background (Caucasian and Asian) and Number of Japanese restaurant experiences (First time, 0-2 times, 3-4 times and 5 times or more).

*Desirable characteristics.* Table 11 reports means for 13 desirable characteristics of a Japanese restaurant in descending order of means. Generally, respondents to this question scored rather high on every item, with lowest mean score being 3.70 and the highest 4.66. In other words, most respondents to this survey perceived most of the items to be desirable,

because all the items' mean were higher than 3.00(=Neutral). Three items indicated high mean scores of more than 4.50. The item rated the highest was " Freshness of the food" with a mean score of 4.66, closely followed by " Cleanliness & hygiene" with a mean score of 4.65. The third was "Overall quality of the food" (mean=4.60).

Six items had moderate mean score of 4.00- 4.49. " Pleasant attitude of the employees" with a mean score of 4.38, closely followed by " Healthiness of the food" with a mean score of 4.36. " Efficiency of service" (mean=4.30) and " Food presentation" (mean=4.27) also fell into this category. " Uniqueness of the food" showed a mean of 4.26, followed by " Different cultural experience" (mean=4.01).

The next four items were rated low, with mean scores of slightly higher than 3.50. They included " Interior or décor" (mean=3.97) and " Variety of menu" (mean=3.88), tied with " Value for price" (mean=3.88). The item that indicated the lowest mean score was " Unable to prepare at home" (mean=3.70).



Table 11: Mean scores of desirable characteristics to respondents

Restaurant characteristics	Mean for total sample
Freshness of the food	4.66
Cleanliness & Hygiene	4.65
Overall quality of food	4.60
Pleasant attitude of the employees	4.38
Healthiness of the food	4.36
Efficiency of service	4.30
Food presentation	4.27
Uniqueness of the food	4.26
Different cultural experience	4.01
Interior or Décor	3.97
Variety of menu	3.88
Value for price	3.88
Unable to prepare at home	3.70

Desirable characteristics by gender, ethnic background and number of Japanese restaurant experiences. One-way Anova and T-test were used to examine the relationship between desirable characteristics and three factors. There was no significant relationship between gender and desirable characteristics.

There were some significant relationships between Ethnic background (Caucasian and Asian) and desirable characteristics of the meal experience (Table 12). Generally, Caucasian respondents indicated higher desirable ratings than Asian respondents in all items. Moreover, Caucasian respondents indicated relatively higher ratings than Asian respondents, most significantly in “Overall quality of food” (sig. = .002), “Value for price” (sig. = .008) and “Different cultural experience” (sig. = .010). These three differences in the mean score of Caucasian and Asian respondents were notable (4.74 as opposed to 4.27 for “Overall quality of the food”, 3.96 as opposed to 3.51 for “Value for price” and 4.15 as opposed to 3.66 for “Different cultural experience”). Also, a moderately significant level was found in “variety of menu” (sig. = .044). The difference in mean score was large between Caucasian (3.96) and Asian (3.61). There was no significant difference between desirable characteristics and the number of Japanese restaurant experiences.

Table 12: Desirable characteristics and ethnic background

Desirable characteristics	Ethnic	N	Mean	Sig.
Uniqueness of the food	Caucasian	95	4.29	.082
	Asian	41	4.05	
Healthiness of the food	Caucasian	97	4.38	.675
	Asian	41	4.32	
Food presentation	Caucasian	96	4.33	.118
	Asian	41	4.10	
Overall quality of the food	Caucasian	97	4.74	.002*
	Asian	41	4.27	
Freshness of the food	Caucasian	97	4.72	.182
	Asian	41	4.54	
Unable to prepare at home	Caucasian	95	3.76	.866
	Asian	40	3.73	
Pleasant attitude of the employees	Caucasian	97	4.37	.615
	Asian	41	4.29	
Efficiency of service	Caucasian	97	4.31	.465
	Asian	41	4.20	
Cleanliness & hygiene	Caucasian	96	4.68	.273
	Asian	41	4.54	
Interior or décor	Caucasian	97	3.93	.887
	Asian	41	3.90	
Variety of menu	Caucasian	96	3.96	.044*
	Asian	41	3.61	
Value for price	Caucasian	96	4.04	.008*
	Asian	41	3.51	
Different cultural experience	Caucasian	95	4.15	.010*
	Asian	41	3.66	

Note. \* = Significance  $p < .05$  level

Table 13: Mean scores of satisfaction characteristics of respondents

Restaurant characteristics	Mean for total sample
Pleasant attitude of the employees	4.57
Cleanliness & hygiene	4.57
Freshness of the food	4.49
Overall quality of the food	4.44
Healthiness of the food	4.35
Food presentation	4.35
Interior of décor	4.29
Uniqueness of the food	4.26
Efficiency of service	4.23
Variety of menu	4.09
Different cultural experience	3.99
Value for price	3.87
Unable to prepare at home	3.84

*Satisfaction characteristics.* Table 13 reports means for 13 characteristics of satisfaction with a Japanese restaurant in descending order of means. Overall, respondents to this question also scored rather high on every item, with lowest mean score being 3.84 and the highest 4.57. In other words, most respondents to this survey perceived most of the items to be satisfactory because all items' means were higher than 3.00(=Neutral). The items rated the highest were "Pleasant attitude of the employees" with a mean score of 4.57, tied "Cleanliness & hygiene" with a mean score of 4.57. The second was "Freshness of the food" (mean=4.49). The third higher mean was "Overall quality of the food" (mean=4.44). Notably, in these top three, four items were all in this top four desirable characteristics (Top four desirable characteristics; 1) Freshness of the food, 2) Cleanliness & hygiene, 3) Overall quality of the food and 4) Pleasant attitude of the employees).

On the other hand, the lower means (more than 4.00) indicated 3 items. These were "Different cultural experience" (mean=3.99), "Value for price" (mean=3.87) and "Unable to prepare at home" (mean=3.84). Here again, "Unable to prepare at home" and "Variety of menu" were also in the top two least desirable items.

Satisfaction characteristics by gender, ethnic background and number of Japanese

restaurant experiences. One-way Anova and T-test were used to examine the relationship between satisfaction characteristics and three factors. As indicated in Table 14, there was only one significant relationship identified between gender and “Unable to prepare at home” (sig.= .013). The difference in mean scores was especially large between “female” (4.05) and “male” (3.62).

Table 14: Satisfaction characteristics and gender.

Satisfaction characteristics	Gender	N	Mean	Sig.
Unable to prepare at home	Female	76	4.05	.013*
	Male	73	3.62	

Note. \* = Significance  $p < .05$  level

As indicated in Table 15, significant / moderately significant differences were identified between ethnic background and satisfaction characteristics in more than half of the items. These included “Uniqueness of the food” (sig. = .004), “Healthiness of the food” (sig. = .003), “Food presentation” (sig. = .000), “overall quality of the food” (sig. = .000), “Freshness of the food” (sig. = .000), “Pleasant attitude of the employees” (sig. = .021),

“Cleanliness & hygiene” (sig. = .032) and “Interior or décor” (sig. = .026). Generally, Caucasian respondents indicated higher satisfaction ratings than Asian respondents in all items. There was no significant correlation between satisfaction characteristics and the number of Japanese restaurant experiences.

Table 15: Satisfaction characteristics and ethnic background

Satisfaction characteristics	Ethnic	N	Mean	Sig.
Uniqueness of the food	Caucasian	95	4.35	.004*
	Asian	41	3.95	
Healthiness of the food	Caucasian	96	4.47	.003*
	Asian	41	4.07	
Food presentation	Caucasian	96	4.50	.000*
	Asian	41	4.02	
Overall quality of the food	Caucasian	96	4.60	.000*
	Asian	41	4.07	
Freshness of the food	Caucasian	95	4.66	.000*
	Asian	40	4.05	
Unable to prepare at home	Caucasian	90	3.94	.063
	Asian	40	3.60	
Pleasant attitude of the employees	Caucasian	95	4.68	.021*
	Asian	41	4.39	
Efficiency of service	Caucasian	96	4.27	.488
	Asian	41	4.15	
Cleanliness & hygiene	Caucasian	96	4.65	.032*
	Asian	41	4.39	
Interior or décor	Caucasian	95	4.34	.026*
	Asian	41	4.02	
Variety of menu	Caucasian	93	4.12	.140
	Asian	41	3.88	
Value for price	Caucasian	95	3.98	.071
	Asian	41	3.66	
Different cultural experience	Caucasian	94	4.05	.051
	Asian	41	3.76	

Note. \* = Significance  $p < .05$  level



### **Analysis of Responses to the Two Open-ended Questions**

These comments and their frequencies were obtained by performing a word count for each response. E.g. the number of times respondents used the keywords like “Tasty”, “Healthy” and “Atmosphere” etc. to describe their positive and negative experience in general at the Japanese restaurant. The percent column is a simple and straightforward percentage of the frequency from the total number of respondents. The variables are presented in descending order. Nevertheless, stated “in general” on the question, many respondents gave the positive and negative comments about this particular Japanese restaurant.

*Positive comments about any Japanese restaurant.* Table 16 reports positive comments about any Japanese restaurant in general, the total of 104 respondents (65.4% of all respondents) gave positive comments about Japanese restaurants. There were four items considered as significant, because all these four items were noted by over 10 % of total respondents. The most frequent good comment about Japanese restaurant was “Tasty food”(29 comments). Many people felt they liked the tastiness of the Japanese food. One respondent stated that the Japanese cuisine is simple, but delightful. Other respondents expressed “not greasy” and “ I like the lightness of sushi”. Compared to typical American food, Japanese foods contain less fat and calories as stated in related literature. “Good

service”(24 comments) marked the second of the rank. Several respondents out of the 24 good comments about service mentioned they liked the politeness of the employees in the Japanese restaurant. One respondent described “Helpful staff to explain menu”. Explaining the menu is very important in a Japanese restaurant, because there are always customers who are not familiar with this cuisine. “Healthy food” (21 comments) marked third of the rank. That shows how healthiness is important to today’s consumer as stated in the literature review. Fourth of the rank was “Good atmosphere” (19 comments). This shows that customers like the calm, relaxing Japanese atmosphere. One respondent felt “ We can be relaxed when we sit on a tatami mat”. In this restaurant, there are 4 booths which have a tatami mat. The researcher observed that a considerable number of customers was willing to select this kind of sitting space.

The following did not mark on the high rank, but they are worth discussing in this section. Eleven respondents indicated “Freshness of food” as their positive comments. This result was interesting, because “Freshness of food” was the most important item in the desirable characteristic, but this item did not appear on the high ranks. The researcher assumes that respondents thought freshness of food is a necessary standard for the restaurant.

Based on the good comments, the favorite Japanese dishes among this

population were identified. These are 1) Sushi, 2) Sashimi, 3) Tempura and 4) California rolls.

Table 16: Positive comments about any Japanese restaurants(in general).

Comments	N	%
Tasty food	29	18
Good service (employees' friendliness)	24	15
Healthy food	21	13
Good atmosphere (Interior and décor)	19	12
Freshness of the food	11	7
Uniqueness of the food	10	6
Love sushi and sashimi	9	5
Good presentation	9	5
Quality of food	5	3
Good cultural experience	5	3
Good location	3	2
Sushi chef	3	2
Miss my familiar food (Japanese people)	3	2
Love Tempura	3	2
It's nice to try new food	3	2
Variety of selection (many sushi options)	2	1
Good portion	2	1
Love California rolls	2	1
Aroma	2	1
Love music	2	1
Vegetarian availability	1	0.6
Very clean	1	0.6
Love Miso soup	1	0.6

Table 17: Negative comments about any Japanese restaurants.

Comments	N	%
Expensive	30	19
Slow service (bad service)	13	8
Bad quality of food	9	6
Lack of variety of menu (e.g. no vegetarian options)	5	3
No free tea and no free refill on pop	4	2.5
Small portion	4	2.5
Dirty service items (menu, glass, chair with stain)	4	2.5
Not fresh food	3	1.8
Low skill of sushi chef	2	1
Language barrier	2	1
Hard to eat	2	1
Not open between 2-5pm.	2	1
Overwhelming, if you are not familiar with cuisine.	2	1
Needs better music	1	0.6
Not many dessert choices	1	0.6
My friend dislike sushi.	1	0.6
Needs cheaper Japanese non-alcoholic drink	1	0.6
Chopsticks	1	0.6

Negative comments about any Japanese restaurants. Table 17 shows negative comments about Japanese restaurants. A total of 74 respondents (46.5% of all respondents) gave negative comments about Japanese restaurants. The negative comments were about 20% less than positive comments. Top 1 negative comment was “expensive”. Notably approximately 19% of respondents felt Japanese restaurants are more pricy than American style restaurants. One respondent mentioned, “Price is too high compared to quantity of

food”. One respondent felt, “We would dine here often if the price was more moderate”.

Next categories represented fewer comments compared to “Expensive”.

However, those are also very important. “Slow service” (13 comments) was the second frequent comment. These comments are representing particularly in this restaurant. Two respondents out of 13 respondents mentioned their “Bad service” such as misunderstanding the orders or just lack of skills of the attendant. “Bad quality of food” (9 comments) marked the third. For example, these comments were “some different ingredients which are not supposed to be there on the dish” or “meal was over cooked”.

Moreover, the rest of the negative comments except the above 3 items were also interesting and should be discussed in this section. One interesting negative comment was “Lack of variety of menu”(5 comments). A few respondents out of 5 respondents also indicated lack of vegetarian options. However, it should be remembered that there was one positive comment in the last positive comments section, “Willing to accommodate vegetarians by offering food not listed on menu”. In addition, this restaurant does have vegetarian menus such as “vegetable tempura”, and also will alter choices for a vegetarian diner. However, customers deserve more vegetarian options on their menu. Four respondents complained about “Dirty service items” such as menu, glasses, chairs etc. “No free tea and no free refills on pop”(4 comments) was also important negative comment.

One respondent stated “No free refills on pop. This is a problem, may not be back.” Four respondents mentioned “Small portion”. It should be remembered, however, that there were two positive comments about “Portion” in the positive comments section. Thus, satisfaction with the portion size depends on personal preference. In addition, 2 respondents indicated that Japanese restaurants sometimes have a language barrier.

### **Summary**

Female respondents (52.2%) and male respondents (47.8%) were almost equal. A typical respondent in this survey was between ages 18 – 29 (34.6%), Caucasian (62.8%), bachelor degree holder (42.0%) currently employed (93.7%), household size of 2 persons (34.6%), annual household income \$100,000 or more (28.6%) and had dined out 5 times or more at a Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months (101 respondents=63.5%).

Top four desirable and satisfaction characteristics in a Japanese restaurant were freshness of the food, cleanliness & hygiene, overall quality of food and peasant attitude of the employees. There were several characteristics, which showed a significant relationship between Caucasian respondents and Asian respondents. On the whole, Caucasian respondents have both higher expectations of and satisfaction with Japanese restaurant characteristics than Asian customers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

“What are the customer expectations of and satisfactions with a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis?” was examined to contribute to improvement of the food service industry’s knowledge about customer expectation and satisfaction. The objectives were: (1) To determine the demographic profile of customers who dine at a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. (2) To identify customer expectations of a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. (3) To examine customer needs and satisfaction with a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. A survey designed to meet those objectives collected 159 usable surveys at the restaurant, although several participants did not respond to all the questions.

#### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

In these data, female respondents (52.2%) and male respondents (47.8%) were almost equal. A typical respondent in this survey was between ages 18 – 29 (34.6%), Caucasian (62.8%), bachelor degree holder (42.0%) currently employed (93.7%), household size of 2 persons (34.6%), annual household income \$100,000 or more (28.6%) and had dined out 5 times or more at a Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months (101 respondents=63.5%).

About 60% of the respondents were between 18 – 39 years old. Only 6.9% of respondents were 60 years old or older. As stated in related literature, the key market target in an ethnic restaurant is Generation X and Y (age 18-34). The next important target market of this Japanese restaurant is the “Baby boomer” (age 38-57), especially younger baby boomers.

It is also notable that more than one third of respondents (36.3 %) had a Master’s degree or higher. The respondents to this survey have a higher level of education than average which is reflected in their occupation data. Occupation was well distributed among the demographics. The occupation most frequently indicated by respondents was Professional (20.3%); Student (19.0%), Other (19.0%), Managerial (10.2%) and Office worker (10.1%) were represented. Two of the lowest numbers of response were Homemaker (4.4%) and Retiree (1.9%).

More than half of the respondents are living alone or with one other person. This reflected the general tendency of “Nuclear family”. As stated earlier in related literature, another factor influencing the food service industry is the increasing number of single-person households and the potential for people living alone to eat out. They tend to spend a larger amount of their food budget on meals away from home than do family groups (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994). A household size of 1 person was



the second most frequent answer in this population.

The annual household income was also well distributed across the given choices, ranging from “\$24,999 or less” to “\$100,000 or more”. This result reflected respondents’ variety of occupations. There are a considerable number of “Student” populations (19.0%) in this survey. “Student” is usually lower income than others. The possible reason for high student population is the location of this restaurant which is close to a major University.

There were two major ethnic groups in this sample. The major ethnic background was Caucasian (62.8%), while Asian was 25.3%. These two ethnic categories are the key target market in Japanese restaurants.

“Number of Japanese restaurant experiences” shows a significant result. The majority of respondents (96.2%=153 respondents) had tried a Japanese restaurant before. Notably, almost 70% of these people had tried a Japanese restaurant more than 5 times in past 12 months. These result show most of the respondents are repeat customers of Japanese restaurants.

Reason for dining at this Japanese restaurant was mostly “Regular dining”(55.3%). This implied that dining at a Japanese restaurant is a regular place to go for most of the respondents.

### **Desirable Characteristics of a Japanese Restaurant**

Examination of desirable characteristics of a Japanese restaurant revealed how high customer expectation toward a Japanese restaurant is. Most of the customers responded that most of the items on the survey were very desirable. In order of importance, freshness of the food; cleanliness & hygiene; overall quality of food; and pleasant attitude of the employees were the top four of the list of the desirable characteristics in a Japanese restaurant. These four items can be said to be the most necessary elements in the Japanese restaurants. Although the rest of the items were not so high in the means, it does not mean they were unimportant, because all the items' means marked relatively high in this survey and the lowest mean score was 3.70 which is close to "somewhat desirable". It is important to say that being ranked least desirable is only a matter of degree.

Since Japanese restaurants serve large amounts of raw fish, the top one characteristics noted as "Freshness of the food" is understandable. As stated in related literature, much research is being conducted and reported by the media concerning the impact of nutrition on health. People are becoming generally more knowledgeable about nutrition and food safety (Payne-Palacio, Harger, Shugart & Theis, 1994). Related to the high necessity of "Freshness of the food", food safety concern should be discussed. According to Grover and Tong (2003), 76 million people become ill from food borne

illnesses annually. Bacterial pathogens accounted for 75% of the outbreaks; *Salmonella Enteritidis* was the leading bacterial pathogen responsible for these outbreaks. Combined with this fact and high consumer expectation about “cleanliness & hygiene” and “freshness of the food” shown in the survey, restaurant operators must employ some kind of food safety training among all employees if they have never done before. In the same time, “Cleanliness & hygiene” ranked the second high desirable item which is as important as “Freshness of the food”. These two high desirability items imply if a restaurant has no certain standard of these items, customers will never come back. Obviously, Japanese restaurant operators should maintain or increase their “Freshness of the food” and “Cleanliness & hygiene”. It is smart idea to employ a food safety training program like “ServSafe” which is an excellent educational tool administered by NRA. “Servsafe” is recognized by more federal, state, and local health jurisdictions than any other food safety training in the U.S. (NRA, 2003b).

“Overall quality of food” was the third highest desirable item in this survey. To sum up, these results suggest that Japanese restaurant operators should focus on providing freshness of food, maintain and increase cleanliness and a hygienic environment and keep the overall quality of the food high.

## **Desirable Characteristics of a Japanese Restaurant and Their Significant Relationship to Ethnic Background**

Overall, Caucasian respondents had higher desirability of all items than Asian respondents. It can be said that Caucasians are more demanding customers than Asian customers. The results showed that there were four significant relationships between desirable characteristics of the Japanese restaurant and Caucasians and Asians. These were “Overall quality of food”(sig.= .002), “Value for price”(sig.= .008), “Different cultural experience” (sig.= .010) and “Variety of menu” (sig.= .044). At this point, it can be said that Caucasian and Asian customers have different perspectives. For example, there are considerable numbers of Japanese customers included in the “Asian” categories. For the Japanese customers, dine at Japanese restaurant does not mean “Different cultural experience”, it is part of their life. Even other Asian customers are usually more familiar with Japanese culture than any other ethnic groups, so other Asians might not consider dining at a Japanese restaurant is a “Different cultural experience”.

Another interesting significant difference was “Value for price”. According to these data, Caucasian respondents were more price sensitive customers than Asian.

### **Satisfaction Characteristics of a Japanese Restaurant**

Notably, the top four items were the same as the top four in desirable characteristics, but in different orders. In order of importance, pleasant attitude of the employees; cleanliness & hygiene; freshness of the food and overall quality of the food. Combining the two results, both desirable and satisfaction characteristics, it can be said customers expected these top four items more than any other items, and customers were satisfied with these top four items than any other items. However, after comparing Tables 11 and 13, only “Pleasant attitude of the employees” exceeded the mean score for satisfaction (mean=4.57) compared to the desirable (mean=4.38). Other 3 items, “Cleanliness & hygiene”, “Freshness of the food” and “Overall quality of the food”, did not exceed the mean score for satisfaction compared to desirable. As stated in related literature, creating loyal customers is critical for restaurant operators. Restaurant operators should not be content with having satisfied customers. They need customers who are extremely satisfied in order to create the customers’ loyalty. In addition to benefiting from the extremely satisfied customers' repeat patronage, restaurant operators can save their marketing expenses because of the extreme satisfied customers' marketing power (Bowen & Chen, 2001).

On the contrary, the top three least satisfaction characteristics were as follows: different cultural experience, value for price and unable to prepare at home. For “Different cultural experience”, respondents might not consider the Japanese cuisine as experiencing a different culture, but think of the Japanese cuisine as a regular meal. For “Value for price”, it should be remembered the result of the negative comments, almost 20% customers indicated that the Japanese restaurant is expensive. Combining the result of low satisfaction for “value for price” and many customers’ negative comments, it is obvious to say that Japanese restaurant operators need to re-consider their prices.

Overall, customers in the Japanese restaurant were relatively satisfied as shown in the higher scores for many of the satisfaction items. However, it does not mean those satisfaction items’ rate exceeded desirable items’ rate.

### **Satisfaction Characteristics of the Japanese Restaurant and Their Significant Relationship to Gender and Ethnic Background**

On the whole, significance differences have been found in satisfaction characteristics between Caucasian respondents and Asian respondents for 8 items out of 13. Overall, Caucasian respondents were more satisfied with all items than Asian respondents. In the desirable section, Asian customers also indicated that they have lower expectations toward all questions about desirability. In other words, it can be said that Caucasian

customers have both higher expectations of and satisfaction with Japanese restaurant characteristics than Asian customers.

Three incredibly significant differences were found between satisfaction characteristics and Caucasian and Asian customers. Those were “freshness of the food” (sig.= .000), “overall quality of the food” (sig.= .000) and “food presentation” (sig.= .000). Caucasian customers were satisfied relatively higher with these three items than Asian customers.

Only one significant difference was found between gender and “unable to prepare at home”(sig.= .013). More female customers felt Japanese cuisine is “unable to prepare at home” than male customers. This typifies the general idea that women are usually more knowledgeable about cooking than men.

### **Summary and Recommendations for Restaurant Operators**

This study has some limitations as noted earlier, and the results are by no mean definitive. Since it was intended, however, to make a small contribution to enhancing the industry’s knowledge about customers in a Japanese restaurant, some conclusions should be made from this study. Thus, it is recommended that restaurant operators be mindful of the following when they target consumers similar to those studied in this research:

1. Maintain quality control of food. Especially, freshness of raw fish is primarily

important in the Japanese restaurant, because they serve large amounts of raw fish.

2. Improve cleanliness and hygiene. Employing the food safety education program “Servsafe” might be an efficient way to increase employees’ performance in this field.
3. Re-consider the price. The most frequent negative comment was “Pricey”.
4. Increase the service efficiency. Although most of the customers consider “Pleasant attitude of employees” at the Japanese restaurant, Japanese restaurant operators should still increase their service efficiency, because a lot of customers complain of the restaurant’s “slow service” in the survey. In order to improve employees’ job efficiency, restaurant management should supply more training opportunities to their staffs.
5. Emphasize the “healthy” aspect on the menu. Adding total calories or nutrition facts might be sufficient. Stress how Japanese cuisine is excellent as far as a diet and well-balanced nutrition.

### **Recommendations for Further Studies**

As a result of the survey and literature review, several possible avenues of research are suggested as follows:

1. A similar study should be conducted with a larger sample size.
2. A similar study would be more effective if combined with qualitative interviews.
3. A similar study should be conducted with other ethnic restaurants (E.g. Italian, Chinese,



Korean restaurants).

4. This research should be undertaken in different cities of the United States.
5. Based on # 2, combining quantitative and qualitative research, comparative studies with this study can be conducted to identify similarities and differences between Japanese restaurants and other ethnic restaurants.
6. This research can be undertaken using equal numbers of Asians and Caucasians.

This paper explored customer expectations and satisfactions with a Japanese restaurant, in order to better understand consumer expectation, satisfaction and needs for the food service industry. Through the research process, the researcher learned how customer's opinions are very important in food service research. Without their candid opinions, the food service industry cannot grow and develop better business strategies. Thus, it is the researcher's personal opinion that conducting an accurate and efficient survey is a key to success in the food service survey. The more and better surveys are conducted, the more restaurant operators can understand the consumers.

I enjoyed the whole process of the thesis and liked meeting different people, was pleased to get to know other view points. This made me realize how varied the outlook and expectations of many people are. I have the utmost respect for anyone who does research.

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**APPENDIX A**

## QUESTIONNAIRE ON RESTAURANT EXPERIENCES

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a master's thesis at the University of Wisconsin- Stout. The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify customers' expectations toward a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis; I would appreciate a few minutes of your time (approximately **5-6 minutes**) to complete the questionnaire. While your response to this survey is voluntary, opinions are needed from as many people as possible to contribute to understanding of customers' expectation toward the Japanese restaurant. Therefore, again, I would truly appreciate your response. Your response to this survey is strictly confidential, and the result will be used only for the purpose of completing my master's thesis.

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of this study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice. NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Lynnette Brouwer, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232- 2541.

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Please check (or circle) or write your responses to the following items.

**Before the meal** (Q1-Q7 are optional, but it would be greatly appreciated if you would given me this information. Thank you so much.)

1. Gender:     female         male

2. Age:     18-29     30-39     40-49     50-59  
            60-69     70 or over

3. Education background:

Up to high school         Associate degree/vocational technical training  
 Bachelor's degree         Master's degree or higher

4. Occupation:

Professional (Dr. Lawyer etc)     Managerial     Office worker  
 Teacher/Professor             Homemaker     Student  
 Entrepreneur             Retiree             Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Household size:     1     2     3     4     5 person or more

6. Annual household income:

\$0-\$24,999             \$25,000-\$39,999     \$40,000-\$54,999  
 \$55,000-\$69,999             \$70,000-\$84,999     \$85,000-\$99,999  
 \$100,000 or more

7. Ethnic background:

Caucasian     African American     Hispanic  
 Asian         Native American     Multi-racial  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_



8. Is this your first time trying Japanese cuisine?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes --- Skip to question #9 on the next page.

\_\_\_\_\_ No ---How often have you dined at Japanese restaurant during the past 12 months?

\_\_\_\_\_ 0 times \_\_\_\_\_ 1 times \_\_\_\_\_ 2 times

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 times \_\_\_\_\_ 4 times \_\_\_\_\_ 5 times or more

9. Following is a list of Japanese restaurant characteristics. Before dining, please rate your **desirability** of these characteristics. Please use the following scale and circle one number for each item.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Extremely undesirable	Somewhat undesirable	Neutral	Somewhat desirable	Extremely desirable

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Uniqueness of the food                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Healthiness of the food                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Food presentation                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Overall quality of the food            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Unable to prepare at home              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. Pleasant attitude of the employees     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. Efficiency of service                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. Cleanliness & hygiene                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j. Interior or décor                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k. Variety of menu (e.g. vegetarian menu) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| l. Value for price                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| m. Different cultural experience          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. What is your occasion to dine out today?

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular dining (with family or friends) \_\_\_\_\_ Business

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Occasion (e.g. Anniversary) \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**After your meal**

11. After dining, please rate your **satisfaction** in the following categories?

Please circle one number for each item

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Extremely unsatisfied	Somewhat unsatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Extremely Satisfied

a. Uniqueness of the food	1	2	3	4	5
b. Healthiness of the food	1	2	3	4	5
c. Food presentation	1	2	3	4	5
d. Overall quality of the food	1	2	3	4	5
e. Freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish)	1	2	3	4	5
f. Unable to prepare at home	1	2	3	4	5
g. Pleasant attitude of the employees	1	2	3	4	5
h. Efficiency of service	1	2	3	4	5
i. Cleanliness & hygiene	1	2	3	4	5
j. Interior or décor	1	2	3	4	5
k. Variety of menu (e.g. vegetarian menu)	1	2	3	4	5
l. Value for price	1	2	3	4	5
m. Different cultural experience	1	2	3	4	5

**After the dining experience today, please give me your brief comments about positive and negative aspects about Japanese restaurants (in general).**

**12. Positive**

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**13. Negative**

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**Thank you so much for your time and cooperation!**

**Please leave the survey on the table, when you leave.**

**APPENDIX B**

## 12. Positive comments about Japanese restaurants:

### Survey

#### No.

1. Good service
5. Healthy, fresh, good tasting.
6. Good food
14. They are pleasant places at which to eat.
17. Really good food. Pleasant employees. Great music. Beautiful view. Love California rolls.
18. Enjoy the food and atmosphere. My favorite kind of restaurant.
19. Able to eat fresh raw fish (sushi and sashimi).
20. Enjoyed a lot (Because I am Japanese).
21. Place where I can experience the food that I miss.
24. Tasty.
25. Smells good. Not fishy. Helpful staff to explain menu.
29. Authentic food. Good sushi chefs. Each sushi bar has its own specialties that are unique.
30. Great food. Love the sushi chefs.
31. The sushi chefs are always nice.
32. Pleasant service. Clean environment.
33. Taste good.
34. Japanese restaurants tend to provide a more refined dining experience than many typical American style restaurants. I like the emphasis on the presentation and quality of the ingredients and the meal as a whole.
35. Lots of pride is taken in style. Service and kindness of employees is obviously requisite for any employee of such establishment.
36. The food is prepared perfect every time. Miso soup is the best.
37. Lovely to look at, healthy, "out of the ordinary" for Minneapolis area in general.
38. Willing to accommodate vegetarians by offering food not listed on menu.
39. Healthy
40. Excellent fresh sashimi, great presentation; very good tempura.
41. The quiet and polite atmosphere is so conducive to a calm healthy meal.
42. Non-American menu
43. Quiet, soft lighting and relaxing.
45. Well decoration, polite service.
46. Very good location. (Accessible)

47. Fresh food, good service, unique taste of food. Politeness and kindness of waitress.
48. Appearances, taste, uniqueness, good service.
49. Great unique taste
50. Fresh and healthy
52. Very healthy, very tasty especially Sushi and Sashimi and decoration is really beautiful.
53. Healthy food
54. Fresh and not greasy. Pretty presentation.
55. Tasty
56. Nice atmosphere, beautiful scenery, nice hosts and overall quality of food is very good.
57. Healthy
58. Great service and Tempura
59. I enjoy Japanese food.
60. I like Sushi. Great atmosphere.
61. Wonderful and healthy food
67. I like this restaurant.
68. Service, size of pieces of Sushi.
69. Very polite and pleasant service
70. Always enjoy Japanese restaurants. I like the lightness of sushi.
71. Very good experience.
72. Relaxing music, healthy food, and convenient location.
73. Love Sushi
74. I love Japanese food.
75. Healthy food and nice people.
76. Good food quality and preparation, artistic and healthy. Every aspect of Japanese restaurant attention to details for a meal being a well-rounded experience.
79. Very tasty and fresh food.
80. It is good to try food I normally would not eat.
81. Eating and trying foods that I normally would not eat.
82. Food quality
83. Quality of food, interior/décor
84. Overall healthy food, plus non-fattening.
85. The best aspect of Japanese restaurants is the uniqueness of food for each individual restaurant.
86. Good, healthy and tasty

87. We love this restaurant. Come from North Dakota.
88. Very nice décor.
93. Good for Asian's taste.
94. Good service. Positive attendants.
95. Great service, opportunity to interact with Japanese people, different food.
96. It is something I seldom get to experience. I really enjoy it.
97. I loved everything.
102. Good cultural experience.
103. Pleasant environment, healthy food.
104. Beauty, healthy
105. Food (tempura) I do not prepare at home. Excellent service.
106. Usually good service
107. There is no Japanese restaurant around my house. I love Sushi.
111. Very healthy and tasty food
112. I enjoy Sushi.
114. Fresh raw fish. Good atmosphere
115. They serve healthy food. We can be relaxed when we sit on tatami mat.
116. We like the atmosphere and cuisine.
117. We come often and enjoy everything.
118. Excellent and unique food. The beauty of Japanese décor and the pleasantness of staff.
119. Good food, unique food, unique cultural atmosphere and staff very positive.
120. Very nice.
121. We love Japanese restaurants and wish we had one in our town.
123. Freshness of food. Simple but delightful.
125. The oriental food, presentation and taste are usually excellent.
126. Very good service. I like the food choices.
127. They are very unique. Both the food content and the presentation. It is always quiet, restful place. Polite staffs.
128. Fresh and healthy
129. I really enjoy the care taken with food presentation and well prepared good sushi. I like the calm atmospheres at most of the Japanese restaurants.
132. I truly adore Japanese cuisine and the experience of a Japanese restaurant has most always been extremely pleasant.
133. Excellent flavors and aromas, very tender meat.
134. Healthy

135. Healthy
136. Very good food. Large portions.
137. Great food. Yum! Beautiful presentation.
138. Good service.
139. Some of the food was good.
140. Good place for family dining.
141. I like the wide variety of Sushi options.
142. Very delicious and has unique flavor, some of them are hard to prepare by your own at home.
143. Great food
144. Good food
147. Good food
148. Ambience, taste
149. Food is different than everyday food. Great tasting food. Mostly healthy, too.
150. Great food
151. A rare treat, Sushi and Tempura were excellent.
152. Fun to have a Japanese experience once and a while.
153. It is all relative to the person, place, and fine. Generalizing Japanese restaurants is solidly hypocritical gesture that frankly, I am not willing to make.
154. Waitress friendly, nice atmosphere. Like location of restaurant.
155. Staff friendly and helpful. California rolls o.k.
157. The food is great overall.
158. Friendly services. Tasty fresh food. Great jobs!
159. Uniqueness and taste



### 13. Negative comments about Japanese restaurants:

#### Survey

#### No.

1. Need better music.
16. Service was slow.
19. Sushi chef does not have enough professional skill as much as them in Japan.
20. Expensive (compare with American restaurants).
21. All the restaurants have virtually the same menu. Hope there are restaurants that would introduce the other Japanese culinary cultures to the U.S.
24. Chopsticks
25. Services assume we know what the menu includes. If ask a question, arrogant and not helpful.
29. If you are hungry, it can be expensive eating sushi a la carte.
32. Slow service
33. Slow service
34. Sometimes it can be overwhelming to people who are not familiar with Japanese food to dine out at a Japanese restaurant.
35. Food and table service can sometimes take unnecessarily long. New guests may be intimidated by the overall presentation of the restaurant.- Americans do not think beyond borders very much. Sometimes they need a little help, sad as it is.
36. Sometimes the sushi takes a long time to prepare, also, at some restaurants give their server's too many tables so service time is shorter.
37. Lack of vegetarian options- usually sushi chef will accommodate this.
38. Shrimp piece in the vegetable tempura.
39. Not enough vegetarian choices on menu.
40. Some shrimps in vegetarian tempura. Service not up to usual high standards (misunderstood 2 orders, unfilled water glasses.) We waited more than 10 minutes for the check.
41. Sometimes a language barrier.
42. Very slow preparation.
44. Expensive
46. Fish was not so fresh.
48. Hard to eat.
49. Needs cheaper Japanese drink. (Non alcoholic Japanese drink)
50. Not so various taste; only one side dish for beef stake Teriyaki.
51. Small portion.

52. Needs more variety choices.
53. Pricy
56. Not open between the hours of 2 to 5 pm.
57. Expensive (especially for dinner).
60. Little expensive for lunch.
61. Cost is high for lunch or a regular meal.
62. Too pricey
69. Wasabi is too mellow
70. I dislike when the fish is not fresh.
75. Portions could be larger.
76. Most Japanese restaurants close between 2 to 5 pm. It will be nice if Japanese restaurant opens all day instead. Late night will also be great.
79. Ramen's soup was not hot enough.
83. Low experienced waitress. Slow service.
84. Menu is too conservative, no changes at all.
93. Somewhat expensive
94. My meal was over cooked.
95. Expensive
96. Food is a little messy and hard to eat.
104. Many of my friends do not like Sushi. Expensive.
108. Sushi roll is too big pieces.
109. Some non-Japanese chefs do not understand what sushi is suppose to be.
111. Extremely pricey.
113. Less amount of food. Expensive
114. Expensive. They do not give free tea.
118. Sometimes too expensive. Lack of a variety of desserts.
123. High price
124. Generally expensive
130. Somewhat expensive
131. Uncomfortable chairs, sometimes the language barrier can be confusing.
134. Beef was somewhat fatty, server was very friendly but we waited a long time for her to take plates/take our credit card.
135. Expensive
136. Expensive- we would dine here often if the price was more moderate. We live within walking distance.
137. No free refills on pop. This is a problem, may not be back.

138. Expensive
139. Cost
140. The food had certain bad qualities.
143. No free soft drink refills
144. Price is too high comparing to quantity of food.
145. No refills on pop. High price.
146. High price
147. Cost, dirty martini glass.
148. If I am with someone who does not eat Japanese-they have little choices.
149. Slow service, took a long time for water and check.
150. Expensive, but is worth it every once in a while.
151. The price does not fit how popular it has become.
153. Fish did not seem that fresh (Tuna, especially); need table clothes, more expensive than we thought for presentation of the food.
156. Menu was kind of dirty (stained), tables and chairs seem kind of cheap. My chair cushion has stains on it.
157. Would like to be served the soup and salad prior to the meal, but came with the meal instead.
158. Service could be a little faster but overall great.