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# A Comparison of the Restaurant Selection Preferences between Residents and Visitors of South Florida

Jin-kyung Choi

*Purdue University - Main Campus*, [choi108@purdue.edu](mailto:choi108@purdue.edu)

Ji-eun Lee

*Purdue University*, [ji-eun.lee@ucf.edu](mailto:ji-eun.lee@ucf.edu)

Jinlin Zhao

*Florida International University*, [zhaoj@fiu.edu](mailto:zhaoj@fiu.edu)

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# A Comparison of the Restaurant Selection Preferences between Residents and Visitors of South Florida

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Jin-kyung Choi, M.S.

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana, U.S.A.

Ji-Eun Lee, M.S.

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana, U.S.A.

and

Zinlin Zhao, Ph.D

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Florida International University  
North Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to examine of selection preferences and to compare residents' preferences with visitors' ones in South Florida. Using data 290 customers in full-service restaurants, results show that consumers' restaurant selection preference between residents and visitors is not significantly different; however, there are significant differences among demographic profiles. Implications are discussed to develop unique marketing strategies to attract both residents and visitors in South Florida.

**Key Words:** restaurant selection preference, tourists, marketing, foodservice

## INTRODUCTION

Increase in travel to Florida reported by Visit Florida Research and total domestic travelers to Florida was more than 84.5 million in 2007 which was 0.8 percent increased from the previous year (Visit Florida Research, 2008). Most travel in the United States consists of short trips. Eighty percent of all travel in the nation was for two nights or fewer while the average length of stay for domestic visitors to Florida was 5.3 nights and the length of stay for overseas visitors was 11.1 nights (Travel Industry Association, 2009). Miami had 5,925,046 international visitors and 6,765,735 domestic visitors, for a total of 12,690,781 in 2007 with 2 million residents. Domestic visitors spent \$65.5 billion in tourism including taxable sales and, particularly, the total taxable restaurant sale in Miami was \$2,836,145,201 in 2007(Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2008). Records show that restaurant sales are a significant part of the tourism revenue business in Miami. Meler and Cerovic (2003) emphasized that the food and beverage expenditures in global tourism was one-third of overall tourist expenditures. Considering the fact that approximately 40 percent of the revenues at table service restaurants with a check size of \$25 or larger are coming from tourists, this is very significant for the food industry (National Restaurant Association, 2005).

How consumers choose a restaurant when deciding where to dine out is often discussed for marketing purposes. However, visitors often disregard their daily practices since they are only going to be gone from their every day settings for a limited period of time and may use different considerations when choosing restaurants than the local people. Tourist cities, such as Miami, have both residents and substantial visitors and pay more attention to specific marketing strategies to attract both market segments in restaurants. There has been research examining food and restaurant preferences associated with different groups such as origins of nationality (Barta, 2008; Gyimothy, Rassing & Wanhill, 2000), different meal purposes (Cullen, 2004; Koo, Tao & Yeung, 1999), length of stay (Gyimothy et al., 2000) and age (Gyimothy et al., 2000; Yamanaka, Almanza, Nelson, & DeVaney, 2003). Yet studies investigating differences in restaurant selection between residents and visitors are lacking. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to examine restaurant selection preference and to find out preference discrepancies between residents and visitors when they select a restaurant. The findings of the study will assist regional restaurants' in marketing effectively to attract visitors as well as locals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have provided various theories regarding consumers' motivation for choosing the restaurants or food. Burke and Resnick (2001) defined motivations as internal factors individuals express as needs and desires. Consumers have different degrees of needs and desires when deciding where to dine out and what to eat.

These differences in motivation lead consumers to choose a restaurant based on their preferences. When it comes to dining out, people are constantly looking for comfort as well as quality and a valuable environment away from their daily life (Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece, 2000). Soriano (2002) defined quality as the gap between consumers' expectation and perceptions. Economy growth and higher education level affect consumers' expectations and perceptions of food. Consumers with different levels of needs and expectations would impact selecting a restaurant according to their preferences.

### *Food in Tourism*

Tourists who have never been to the location before may choose a restaurant by a different process than that used by local residents. Tourists' perceptions of food are closely connected with the perception of the place where they will visit or are visiting. In tourism, food is viewed as an attraction, as a cultural exchange, and as a source of marketing development. According to Tikkanen (2007), food tourism has five sectors based on physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualizing needs.

"Gastronomic" tourism has grown significantly in the last few years as a result of improving economic and social growth (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). The main idea of selling to the tourists is not simply to offer them food and beverage but to get consumers satisfied quantitatively, qualitatively, esthetically, ethnologically, gastronomically and in any other sense which will increase secondary expenditure (Meler & Cerovic, 2003). Gyimothy, et al. (2000) found that approximately 34 to 54 percent of tourists considered restaurants as an important factor in visiting a destination. Also, restaurants are viewed as a part of the total tourist package (Sparks, Wildman & Bowen, 2000). Brumback (1999) said that tourists expect high quality food and service as well as wide variety of dining venues and menu options. In addition to quality of food and service, the location of the restaurant, its décor, and ambience were reported to be important factors to increase tourists' gastronomic experience (Sparks, et al., 2000). Interestingly, in the study conducted by Sparks, Bowen and Klag (2003), about 50 percent of respondents rated trying new, exciting and different foods and indulge themselves as very important reasons for eating out when they were vacationing.

### *Important Factors to Select Food and Restaurants*

Johns and Howard (1992) found that consumers have a "mental checklist" or expectations with which they compare an item's quality. Previous research showed that the most important factor determining whether a customer will return to the restaurant was the quality of food; the least considered factors were place and ambience of restaurant (Brumback, 1998; Soriano, 2002; Sulek & Hensley, 2004).

Taste is one of the most used attributes to measure consumer preference in selecting a restaurant. Food consumption is more affected by the consumer's psychological rather than physical need which explains how a dining experience with psychological satisfaction leads consumers to return to the restaurant (Wood, 1995). Therefore, food for solving one's hunger does not satisfy the consumers who have higher degrees of needs and desires. Susheela (1998) claimed that flavorful and healthful meals were linked to the consumers' desire to indulge in tasty foods and their urges to eat healthy meals led consumers to experiment with different herbs and spices.

More Americans have recently become aware of healthy food and its relation to their physical well-being. The issue of well being is considered after other essential human needs have been met. Many consumers have been interested in eating fresh food, free of chemical additives and high in carbohydrates (Tabacchi, 1987). They are looking for healthy food, not junk food. In 2003, obesity in Americans decreased by 1 percent compared to a 2002 report and a recent survey found that 35 percent of the population nationwide carefully plans meals to be nutritious; that is up from 32 percent in 2001 (Ruggless, 2003). Many Americans are carefully preparing their meals at home to have healthy meals, but that might not be the same when they dine out (especially when they are away from their daily life).

Price is one of tangible attributes that consumers consider when they experience dining out. Services cannot be evaluated before they are consumed unlike food, but price can represent food and service before consumers experience them. For example, consumers can predict the differences between \$50 steak and \$15 steak and service of high-end restaurants. Price might not be an absolute predictor for quality of the food and service; however, it can be a good indicator to consumers who have not dined at the restaurant. The previous study showed that price was a concern when consumers took their family and the least concern when consuming business meals (Koo, Tabak & Young, 1999). As considerations to dine out, if tourists can be price sensitive or indulgent when they

decide where to dine out. Portion size of the food has been a driving force to attract consumers to restaurants and it has been used as a marketing tool. According to the study conducted by Cullen (2004), portion size of the food is a more important attribute to the young age group. Also small portion size was one of the health issue attributes influencing restaurant selection by travelers (Gregoire, Shankline, Greathouse & Trip, 1995).

Over the last few decades, quality of service has been center of consumer research. According to the study of John and Howard (1998), service was the most positive aspect when consumers evaluate restaurants and Koo et al. (1999) found that service was the second important factor when consumers select restaurants. Also “service excellence” was one of the significant predictions for consumers in deciding if they return to the restaurant or not (Kivela et al., 2000).

Restaurant patrons remember cleanliness issues longer and more likely avoid that restaurant in the future (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). A study conducted by Knight et al. (2007) found that people who perceived that a restaurant was “not at all” committed to food safety were less likely to choose the restaurant when eating out. Along with this result, Henson et al. (2006) found that cleanliness was the most important determinant for consumers of restaurant food safety. Kivera et al. (2000), Cullen (2004) and Gregoire et al. (1995) found that cleanliness of the restaurant as a significant factor for consumers when deciding where to dine out.

Soriano (2002) claimed that offering good food and good service is not enough to attract consumers and restaurants should provide meals with good value in a favorable ambience. Previous studies (Barta, 2008; Cullen, 2004; Erik & Nir, 2004) showed that attractive décor and atmosphere influenced consumer choice of where to dine out. Belman (1996) said that the most important attributes were design and concept of the place and the least important thing was the food. Kivela et al. (2000) found “ambience excellence” was one of the significant predictions for revisit intention. Sparks et al., (2003) found more than 55% of the respondents were affected by attractive décor when making a choice of restaurant when traveling.

From the study conducted by Sparks, et al. (2003), almost 55 percent of the respondents chose that eating healthy food was very important. Increase of ready-to-eat nutritional food and the application of special diets led consumers to stay in their healthy daily lifestyle while they were away from their daily life (Meler & Cerovic, 2003). According to Yuksel and Yuksel (2002), among value seekers of vacationers, healthy food had the highest mean score for their selecting restaurants and meals. Health issues such as availability of low fat items, salad bar or non-smoking section were measured and they impacted restaurant selection among travelers (Gregoire et al., 1995). It is important to offer variety of healthy meals to attract consumers who are looking for various types of healthy meals and to satisfy their need for nutrition and new experience.

Consumers’ purchasing decisions begin with contacting the information of the product and they look for the best available information for making a decision where to dine out. Cullen (2004) found that 71 percent of the respondent considered “Good reputation” as one of the important attributes when selecting restaurant for a social occasion. Reputation of the restaurants can be obtained by external information sources and consumers were influenced by external information sources such as advertisements and reviews in local newspaper (Sparks et al., 2003). Therefore, marketing communication is an important strategy to advertise the restaurant or the food. Pedraja and Yague (2001) found that consumers searched for the information of the restaurant, especially where there were price differences among restaurants. Printed media and internet were effective tools for consumers to search vacation destination restaurants (Barta, 2008; Sparks et al., 2003; Stephen, Julia & Stephen, 2005). Moreover, the study showed that “word of mouth” such as recommendations from friends, family, or local people in the area appeared as important information sources for restaurant selection (Sparks et al., 2003).

The main research questions are as follows:

- 1) What are the most important factors to select restaurants?
- 2) Are there any significant differences on restaurant selection preferences between residents and visitors of South Florida?
- 3) What are the major findings among demographic criteria of the respondents?

## METHODOLOGY

In order to compare restaurant selection preferences between local consumers and visitors in South Florida, a questionnaire was developed based on a solid literature review from previous studies (Barta, 2008; Cullen, 2004;

Johns & Howard, 1998; Kiverla et al., 1999; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2002). Table 1 shows previous studies of the attributes of consumer preferences when they select restaurants. The present study selected 10 items of the previous studies and utilized them to investigate differences between residents' and visitors' restaurant preferences.

**Table 1**  
**Attributes Used for Restaurant Selection in Previous Studies**

| Attributes                   | Researchers | Johns & Howard | Kivela et al. | Cullen | Barta | Yuksel & Yuksel |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| Taste of the food            |             | Yes            | Yes           | Yes    | Yes   | Yes             |
| Food Portion                 |             | Yes            | No            | Yes    | No    | Yes             |
| Service                      |             | Yes            | Yes           | Yes    | No    | Yes             |
| Price                        |             | Yes            | No            | Yes    | No    | Yes             |
| Ambience/atmosphere          |             | Yes            | No            | Yes    | Yes   | Yes             |
| Presentation of food         |             | Yes            | Yes           | No     | No    | No              |
| Nutritious food              |             | Yes            | Yes           | No     | No    | Yes             |
| Reputation of the restaurant |             | No             | No            | Yes    | No    | No              |
| Cleanliness                  |             | Yes            | Yes           | Yes    | No    | Yes             |
| Variety of healthy meals     |             | No             | No            | No     | Yes   | Yes             |

The questionnaire included menu selection criteria and restaurant selection criteria when consumers select restaurants and menus. Questions about restaurant selection criteria include taste, price, portion, nutritional value, presentation, rating of restaurants, service, cleanliness, ambience, and variety of healthy meals. All questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale rating from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The questionnaire was reviewed by ten randomly selected customers and three faculty members at Florida International University to develop content validity. The completed questionnaires were reviewed to discard ineligible questions. Questionnaires were distributed to full-service restaurants in South Florida and collected face-to-face by researchers during October and November in 2005. Respondents were informed that their participations were voluntary; results would be kept anonymous. Of 396 distributed questionnaires, 307 were collected and 290 were used in the study after data screening processes.

Statistical analyses were conducted using SAS program version 9.1 and Microsoft Office Excel 2003. In order to assess consumers' preferences regarding menu selection and restaurant selection, descriptive statistics - including frequency distribution - mean and standard deviation were used. General linear models (GLM) were employed to examine the significant impact of gender, age, education level, marital status, annual income, budget for a meal on the customers' preference on menu selection and restaurant selection. In addition, GLM were used to compare restaurant selection criteria between residents and visitors in South Florida.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Summary of Respondents' Demographic Profile*

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Residents of South Florida were higher percentage (63%) than visitors (37%) of the total respondents. Gender, age, education level, annual income, and budget for a meal per person showed similar distributions between residents and visitors of the respondents. More than half of the residents and visitors were between the age of 20 – 39 years old. However, residents had a higher percentage of single population (62%) than visitors (45%). Interestingly, although more visitors had a higher income level than the residents, both groups' budgets for a meal per person were similar. Forty percent of the residents had a \$10 - \$20 budget for a meal per person and between \$20 and \$30 was 35 percent, while 32 percent of visitors had a \$10 - \$20 and 41 percent for \$20 - \$30.

### *Preferences of Selecting Restaurants: Residents vs. Visitors of South Florida*

Table 3 shows that preferences of selecting restaurants between residents and visitors, finding no significant differences between them. However, the results of the study showed there were significant differences of residents and visitors by their demographic categories at  $\alpha=.05$  (see Table 4). Ten selected consumer preference attributes were listed by the order of the highest mean value in Table 3. Importantly, the ranks of the preference attributes were identical between residents and visitors. Taste was the highest preference attributes and it also can be explained that personal "liking" is the most influential factor (Johns & Howards, 1998). Taste was preferred significantly different between genders in residents. Female residents preferred taste more than male residents when selecting a restaurant.

**Table 2**

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**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Characteristics                     | Residents (n=183) |    | Visitors (n=107) |    |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----|------------------|----|
|                                     | Number            | %  | Number           | %  |
| <u>Gender</u>                       |                   |    |                  |    |
| Female                              | 79                | 43 | 63               | 59 |
| Male                                | 103               | 56 | 44               | 41 |
| <u>Age</u>                          |                   |    |                  |    |
| Under 20 years old                  | 10                | 5  | 3                | 3  |
| 20 – 29                             | 52                | 29 | 30               | 28 |
| 30 – 39                             | 67                | 37 | 40               | 37 |
| 40 – 49                             | 29                | 16 | 16               | 15 |
| 50 years old and above              | 24                | 13 | 18               | 17 |
| <u>Education level</u>              |                   |    |                  |    |
| High School                         | 40                | 22 | 11               | 10 |
| College                             | 46                | 26 | 26               | 25 |
| University                          | 54                | 30 | 43               | 41 |
| Graduate School                     | 40                | 22 | 26               | 25 |
| <u>Marital status</u>               |                   |    |                  |    |
| Single                              | 113               | 62 | 48               | 45 |
| Married                             | 69                | 38 | 58               | 54 |
| Others                              | 1                 | 1  | 1                | 1  |
| <u>Annual income</u>                |                   |    |                  |    |
| Under \$30,000                      | 27                | 15 | 9                | 9  |
| \$30,000 – 50,000                   | 54                | 30 | 20               | 19 |
| \$50,000 – 70,000                   | 28                | 16 | 12               | 12 |
| \$70,000 – 90,000                   | 19                | 11 | 18               | 17 |
| Over \$90,000                       | 50                | 28 | 44               | 43 |
| <u>Budget for a meal per person</u> |                   |    |                  |    |
| Under \$10                          | 7                 | 4  | 3                | 3  |
| \$10 – 20                           | 73                | 41 | 34               | 32 |
| \$20 – 30                           | 63                | 35 | 44               | 41 |
| \$30 – 40                           | 18                | 10 | 19               | 18 |
| Over \$40                           | 19                | 11 | 7                | 7  |

Cleanliness was the second important attribute to the consumers followed by service. Both residents and visitors showed considerable differences in cleanliness by gender and budget level. Females preferred cleanliness of the restaurant more than males and also higher budget groups preferred cleanliness of the place than lower budget groups. For the service attribute, only the budget groups of the residents and the visitors showed that they favored importance of the service. Higher budget groups of the respondents considered service as more important than lower budget groups; also male and female groups of the visitors agreed in the same way.

**Table 3****Comparison of Restaurant Selection Criteria between Residents and Visitors in South Florida**

|                          | Residents (n=183) |      | Visitors (n=107) |      | F-value | P-value |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------|------------------|------|---------|---------|
|                          | Mean              | SD   | Mean             | SD   |         |         |
| Taste                    | 4.78              | 0.55 | 4.85             | 0.36 | 1.15    | 0.28    |
| Cleanliness              | 4.73              | 0.62 | 4.78             | 0.46 | 0.50    | 0.48    |
| Service                  | 4.48              | 0.70 | 4.50             | 0.59 | 0.06    | 0.80    |
| Ambience                 | 4.23              | 0.83 | 4.11             | 0.74 | 1.46    | 0.23    |
| Price                    | 3.89              | 0.94 | 3.77             | 0.93 | 1.09    | 0.30    |
| Presentation             | 3.85              | 1.10 | 3.77             | 0.97 | 0.39    | 0.53    |
| Variety of healthy meals | 3.79              | 1.09 | 3.77             | 1.02 | 0.02    | 0.87    |
| Nutritional value        | 3.77              | 1.04 | 3.69             | 0.93 | 0.42    | 0.52    |
| Rating                   | 3.59              | 1.06 | 3.59             | 0.92 | 0.00    | 0.99    |
| Portion                  | 3.57              | 1.02 | 3.39             | 0.77 | 2.53    | 0.11    |

The preference of price differed significantly according to marital status of visitors and the budget groups and income levels of the both residents and visitors. Surprisingly, unmarried visitors were more price sensitive than married visitors. Variety of healthy meals and nutritional value were less important than ambience and price. Both residents and visitors considered price more important than nutritional value of meal or reputation of the restaurant. Higher income level groups of the residents and higher budget groups of both residents and visitors significantly preferred ambience than lower income and budget groups.

Nutritional value and variety of healthy meals were significantly important factors to visitors in older age groups. This finding also was supported by older age groups who preferred more nutritious meals when they dined out (Yamanaka, et al., 2003). Female residents were more health conscious when they chose meals or restaurants than male residents and significantly preferred rating information when deciding where to dine. Age and budget groups in visitors showed remarkable differences in preference of food presentation when they select either a restaurant or food. The least important factor for both groups was portion size of the meal. Both residents and visitors with less educational level and visitors with less income considered the portion size as a more important factor.

**Table 4**  
**Comparison of Restaurant Selection Criteria by Demographic Categories between Residents and Visitors in South Florida**

|           | Taste |     | Price |      | Portion |      | Nutrition |      | Presentation |      | Rating |     | Service |      | Cleanliness |      | Ambience |      | Variety |      |  |
|-----------|-------|-----|-------|------|---------|------|-----------|------|--------------|------|--------|-----|---------|------|-------------|------|----------|------|---------|------|--|
|           | R     | V   | R     | V    | R       | V    | R         | V    | R            | V    | R      | V   | R       | V    | R           | V    | R        | V    | R       | V    |  |
| Gender    |       |     |       |      |         |      |           |      |              |      |        |     |         |      |             |      |          |      |         |      |  |
| M         | 4.7*  | 4.7 | 3.8   | 3.9  | 3.7     | 3.6* | 3.8*      | 3.7* | 3.8          | 3.8  | 3.5*   | 3.5 | 4.4     | 4.4* | 4.6*        | 4.6* | 4.2      | 4.1  | 3.6*    | 3.6  |  |
| F         | 4.9*  | 4.9 | 3.9   | 3.8  | 3.4     | 3.4* | 3.8*      | 3.8* | 3.9          | 3.8  | 3.8*   | 3.7 | 4.6     | 4.6* | 4.9*        | 4.9* | 4.3      | 4.2  | 4.0*    | 3.9  |  |
| Marital   |       |     |       |      |         |      |           |      |              |      |        |     |         |      |             |      |          |      |         |      |  |
| S         | 4.8   | 4.8 | 4.0   | 4.0* | 3.6     | 3.6  | 3.8       | 3.7  | 3.8          | 3.8  | 3.7    | 3.6 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.8         | 4.7  | 4.2      | 4.2  | 3.8     | 3.8  |  |
| M         | 4.8   | 4.8 | 3.7   | 3.7* | 3.5     | 3.4  | 3.8       | 3.8  | 3.9          | 3.9  | 3.5    | 3.6 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.7         | 4.8  | 4.3      | 4.2  | 3.7     | 3.8  |  |
| Age-yr    |       |     |       |      |         |      |           |      |              |      |        |     |         |      |             |      |          |      |         |      |  |
| >20       | 4.8   | 4.8 | 4.0   | 3.9  | 3.8     | 3.5  | 3.5       | 3.2* | 3.5          | 3.3* | 3.5    | 3.4 | 4.4     | 4.5  | 4.7         | 4.6  | 4.5      | 4.3  | 3.9     | 3.4* |  |
| 22-29     | 4.8   | 4.8 | 3.8   | 3.9  | 3.6     | 3.6  | 3.6       | 3.6* | 3.6          | 3.5* | 3.6    | 3.5 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.8         | 4.8  | 4.1      | 4.1  | 3.7     | 3.6* |  |
| 30-39     | 4.7   | 4.8 | 3.9   | 3.8  | 3.6     | 3.5  | 3.8       | 3.7* | 4.0          | 3.9* | 3.7    | 3.6 | 4.4     | 4.4  | 4.7         | 4.7  | 4.3      | 4.2  | 3.8     | 3.8* |  |
| 40-50     | 4.9   | 4.8 | 3.9   | 3.9  | 3.5     | 3.4  | 4.1       | 4.0* | 3.8          | 4.0* | 3.5    | 3.7 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.7         | 4.7  | 4.1      | 4.2  | 4.1     | 4.2* |  |
| 50+       | 4.8   | 4.9 | 3.8   | 3.8  | 3.5     | 3.5  | 3.8       | 4.0* | 4.0          | 4.2* | 3.4    | 3.6 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.7         | 4.7  | 4.2      | 4.2  | 3.5     | 3.6* |  |
| Education |       |     |       |      |         |      |           |      |              |      |        |     |         |      |             |      |          |      |         |      |  |
| High      | 4.8   | 4.8 | 4.1   | 3.9  | 3.9*    | 3.8* | 3.6       | 3.5  | 3.8          | 3.9  | 3.6    | 3.6 | 4.5     | 4.6  | 4.7         | 4.7  | 4.3      | 4.2  | 3.8     | 3.6  |  |
| Coll      | 4.7   | 4.7 | 3.9   | 3.9  | 3.7*    | 3.7* | 4.0       | 3.9  | 4.0          | 3.9  | 3.7    | 3.7 | 4.4     | 4.4  | 4.7         | 4.7  | 4.3      | 4.2  | 4.1     | 4.0  |  |
| Uni       | 4.8   | 4.7 | 3.7   | 3.7  | 3.5*    | 3.4* | 3.8       | 3.8  | 3.8          | 3.8  | 3.5    | 3.5 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.8         | 4.7  | 4.2      | 4.2  | 3.6     | 3.8  |  |
| Grad      | 4.9   | 4.9 | 3.9   | 3.9  | 3.2*    | 3.2* | 3.7       | 3.6  | 3.8          | 3.7  | 3.6    | 3.6 | 4.5     | 4.5  | 4.9         | 4.9  | 4.2      | 4.2  | 3.7     | 3.7  |  |
| Income    |       |     |       |      |         |      |           |      |              |      |        |     |         |      |             |      |          |      |         |      |  |
| >30K      | 4.8   | 4.8 | 4.3*  | 4.3* | 3.9     | 3.8* | 4.0       | 3.9  | 3.6          | 3.6  | 3.3    | 3.2 | 4.3     | 4.3  | 4.6         | 4.6  | 3.9      | 3.9* | 3.8     | 3.7  |  |
| 30K-50K   | 4.7   | 4.7 | 4.0*  | 4.0* | 3.7     | 3.6* | 3.7       | 3.7  | 3.8          | 3.8  | 3.6    | 3.6 | 4.6     | 4.5  | 4.7         | 4.7  | 4.2      | 4.2* | 3.9     | 3.8  |  |
| 50K-70K   | 4.8   | 4.9 | 3.7*  | 3.9* | 3.3     | 3.4* | 3.9       | 3.9  | 3.8          | 3.8  | 3.7    | 3.9 | 4.4     | 4.5  | 4.8         | 4.7  | 4.1      | 4.0* | 3.7     | 3.6  |  |
| 70K-90K   | 4.8   | 4.9 | 3.8*  | 3.7* | 3.3     | 3.2* | 3.5       | 3.6  | 4.1          | 4.0  | 3.5    | 3.5 | 4.3     | 4.4  | 4.8         | 4.8  | 4.4      | 4.5* | 3.9     | 3.9  |  |
| 90K+      | 4.8   | 4.8 | 3.7*  | 3.6* | 3.6     | 3.4* | 3.7       | 3.7  | 3.9          | 3.9  | 3.7    | 3.6 | 4.6     | 4.6  | 4.8         | 4.8  | 4.4      | 4.3* | 3.6     | 3.8  |  |
| Budget    |       |     |       |      |         |      |           |      |              |      |        |     |         |      |             |      |          |      |         |      |  |
| >\$10     | 5.0   | 4.9 | 4.4*  | 4.4* | 4.4     | 4.2  | 4.1       | 3.9  | 3.9          | 3.7* | 3.4    | 3.5 | 4.1*    | 4.4* | 4.0*        | 4.3* | 3.9*     | 4.0* | 4.0     | 3.7  |  |
| \$10-\$20 | 4.7   | 4.8 | 4.1*  | 4.1* | 3.6     | 3.6  | 3.5       | 3.6  | 3.6          | 3.6* | 3.4    | 3.4 | 4.3*    | 4.3* | 4.6*        | 4.7* | 4.1*     | 4.1* | 3.8     | 3.8  |  |
| \$20-\$30 | 4.8   | 4.8 | 3.9*  | 3.8* | 3.4     | 3.4  | 4.0       | 3.9  | 3.9          | 3.8* | 3.7    | 3.7 | 4.6*    | 4.6* | 4.8*        | 4.8* | 4.2*     | 4.1* | 3.7     | 3.7  |  |
| \$30-\$40 | 5.0   | 4.9 | 3.4*  | 3.5* | 3.6     | 3.5  | 4.1       | 3.9  | 4.1          | 4.1* | 3.9    | 3.8 | 4.7*    | 4.6* | 4.8*        | 4.8* | 4.5*     | 4.6* | 4.1     | 4.0  |  |
| \$40+     | 4.7   | 4.8 | 3.3*  | 3.1* | 3.6     | 3.3  | 3.7       | 3.8  | 4.4          | 4.2* | 3.9    | 3.8 | 4.8*    | 4.7* | 4.9*        | 4.9* | 4.7*     | 4.5* | 3.9     | 3.9  |  |

R: Residents, V: Visitors, M: Male, F: Female  
\* Significant differences at  $\alpha=.05$

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study show that there is no significant difference between residents' and visitors' preferences when they select eating places unlike the previous research suggested in culinary tourism (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000) and in business travels (Koo et al., 1999). It has been a common assumption that visitors' food or restaurant preferences would differ from residents' preferences since visitors are away from their daily life setting for a limited time.

Although there was no significant difference between residents and visitors regarding preferences, some differences existed according to demographic criteria of these two groups. Higher age groups and higher budget groups of the visitors considered presentation of the food and ambience of the place as important factors to select either a restaurant or food. Therefore, marketers need to use colorful photos of the food and place on visualized materials such as brochures, magazines, or television advertisement in high ends hotels to attract these segments of visitors.

Taste had the highest impact on selecting food and restaurant of all respondents; this clearly suggested that restaurant managers need to develop and provide better tasting food. Distributing coupons with colorful photos of food could attract more consumers who are price sensitive. One of the findings was visitors' levels of the budget for the meal per person was similar to that of the residents. Visitors might have tighter budgets than restaurant managers expect since visitors need to spend money on other activities. Also it might be the fact that the survey was conducted

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during the off-peak season when most budget travelers visited the tourist locations. Restaurant managers and marketers should consider locals and visitors as one market segment and develop unified market strategies to attract both groups. These finding might help restaurant managers and marketers utilize their resources to develop separate marketing strategies for each group.

Despite its managerial implications, the present study has some limitations. The study has geographic limitation since the survey conducted in one area, South Florida. Although the results of the study might be difficult to be generalized, it would be worth expanding this study to other tourist destinations to make further analysis of comparisons between locals' and visitors' behaviors concerning selecting restaurants. The results of the study were interesting in that there was no significant difference between residents' and visitors' preferences on selecting restaurants in South Florida. This study was conducted during the off-peak season; however, results during the peak season could be different. Thus, comparison between these two different time periods could be suggested for future study.

The present study examined consumers' preferences for restaurant selection. However, visitors' actual behavior might be different from their preference since they have limited information about finding a restaurant they may like to dine out. Therefore, expanding the study to consumers' behavior for choosing a restaurant would be worthwhile. The results could provide restaurant managers with valuable strategies to develop better marketing strategies.

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