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# Women are the Dominant Decision Makers when Selecting Restaurants to Dine

Frank Cullen

*Dublin Institute of Technology, frank.cullen@dit.ie*

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## **Women are the dominant decision makers when selecting restaurants to dine**

In a study of 160 females and 143 male restaurant consumers it was found that when male and female partners are involved in the decision to dine out, the female is most likely to be the dominant decision maker. The study was used to examine the decision process used by consumers to select restaurants for both dining out for enjoyment and eating out for convenience. The results indicated that the male respondents believed their female partner are less likely to agree to a restaurant preference expressed by them. Males also indicated that their female partners are more likely to have the greater say. The results also showed that over seventy percent of females claimed that their partners did not have a greater say than them in the decision to dine out. The findings indicated that the decision to dine out is not directly linked to either the education or income of the partners within the household, but more to do with the level of emotions expressed by the partners. For example, it was found that both partners have a similar evoked set of restaurants (a number of different restaurants that conform to the price range of the couple, within a specific location and fit their perceived quality) from which they select one to dine based on their preference mood. However, if both partners express different preferences towards the style of restaurant to dine, the female's choice is the more likely accepted.

In terms of the evoked set of restaurants for selection, the study indicated that this aspect of the decision process is unconsciously affected by the consumer's age. For example, the results showed that the older respondents earning the higher incomes were less likely to spend at the higher end of the price scale than the twenty to twenty nine age groups on lower incomes. The research indicated that when selecting a restaurant the decision process is affected by a combination of factors such as the consumer's age, disposable income and social background. For instance, the results showed that fifty seven percent of senior executives, and senior civil servants, who were among the highest group of respondents with higher level degrees' are the most likely group to select a French styled restaurant. This group were also the least likely to include a steakhouse restaurant in their evoked set. For example, only twenty seven percent of senior executives and senior civil

servants indicated they would consider a steakhouse restaurant for dine. In contrast sixty percent of the trade / skilled workers indicated they would consider a steakhouse for a social occasion, and only thirty percent claims they would consider a French styled restaurant. The trade / skilled workers were among the highest income group with over fifty percent indicating a third level qualification.

The analysis indicated that the main factors impacting on selecting a restaurant to dine were age and disposable income. For example, the most common age for marriage is between the twenty-five and twenty-nine. The study suggests that between the age of twenty five and thirty four, consumers are either married with two incomes or living at home and have the greatest disposable income. Hence this group have a greater acceptance of price. The greatest reference to home loan / mortgage in the study were respondents' between the age of thirty-five and fifty-four, which is indicated that by the age of thirty-five the consumer is likely to have made a major investment in a home. The research identified this age group as price conscious consumers and this in turn affects the type of restaurant selected.

The study provided a behavioural profile of consumers and the type of restaurant most likely selected by the various age and income groups were characterised as follows:

- Age sixteen to under-thirty. This group can be subdivided into those who live with their family and those who are independent, most possibly between the age of twenty-five and thirty, who do not have children and are most likely married or living with a partner and have two incomes. These groups have limited responsibilities and lead an active social life, have a greater acceptance to higher prices and are likely to dine out more than once per week. This group prefer Italian, Chinese, French styled, mixed ethnic and bistros restaurants in that order.
- Young married age between thirty and thirty-nine and have children. The addition of the child impacts on the dining pattern and the importance of their salient attributes' change. For example, the location of the restaurant becomes more important-

distance is now a factor. This group will most likely have a first time mortgage with an average monthly repayment of €900 to €1,500 (CSO, 2001). They have new purchases in the area of baby clothes, furniture, food and health care products, and are more price conscious, thus their dine out pattern changes. This group still prefer the same types of restaurants as the twenty to twenty nine age group, but they are more likely to include steakhouses into the evoked set of restaurants.

- The forty to forty-nine groups can be characterised as middle-aged married with children. As the children grow their influence on decisions to dine out became greater. This group have eased the burden of the mortgage repayments and are beginning to increase their disposable income and eat out more than any other age group. Preferences in the type of restaurant selected is beginning to change, however, they still like Italian, Chinese, French styled and seafood restaurants when dining as a couple. When dining with the family/children, they are more likely to select restaurants that the children are happy in, for example, Pizza house, American diners, steakhouses and they begin to consider the pub carvery in their choice of restaurants when dining out. As the children become teenagers their impact on the type of restaurant selected increases further. On occasions the teenager is given the power to select the restaurant, within an evoked set/price range. This group is also price conscious when dining out and they tend to select more moderately priced restaurants.
- Characterised as empty nest one, older married couple age fifty to fifty-nine. The children are independent, but may be living at home thus contributing to the household income and have little or no impact on decisions to dine out. The dine-out and eat out frequency patterns remain similar to the forty to forty-nine group but the selection of restaurant is changing. This group is less likely to consider mixed ethnic restaurants, American diners and Pizza houses. The main choice of restaurant is Italian, Chinese, French styled and seafood restaurants but these are moving down the scale. The study is suggesting that the evoked set of restaurants is growing with the greater disposable income and lack of child constraints involved. This group is more likely to include pub carvery, hotels and fish and chip restaurants in the evoked

set. The respondents in this age group have indicated a fairly balanced selection approach to the various styled restaurants in the study. Further investigation into the selection of fish and chip restaurants revealed that consumers are likely to drive to a scenic area. For example, take a trip to Howth in Co Dublin, buy a fish and chip, and sit in their car or on a wall eating before going for a walk and then a drink in the local bar. This behaviour is associated with a comforting rather than a dining experience for couples and would normally be dependent on the weather.

- Empty nest aged sixty plus, married with one partner still working but considering his/her retirement or are retired. This group prefers hotel restaurants/carvery, pub carvery, pub restaurants and fish and chip restaurants. They are unlikely to consider Chinese/ Thai or French styled restaurants and are the least likely group to dine in a Japanese restaurant, American diners, Brasserie or Bistro restaurants. The preferred styles of restaurant indicated in the survey are more modestly priced. However if this group were to consider a higher priced restaurant to dine out it would most likely be seafood. The seafood restaurant received the same factor rating as the pub restaurant, pub carvery and Italian restaurant. In Table 1 the ranked attributes used by respondents' to select restaurants is presented.

## Attributes Considered when Selecting a Restaurant for a Social Occasion in Dublin

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### Attribute Response for Restaurant Selection

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Quality of Food	94%
Type of Food	86%
Location	76%
Cleanliness Factor	75%
Ambience / atmosphere	74%
Good Reputation	71%
Quality of Service	67%
Cost of Food	64%
Friendliness of Staff	56%
Comfort Level of Restaurant	51%
Menu Item Variety	46%
New Meal Experience	44%
Competent Waiting Staff	35%
Speed of Service	34%
Restaurant Décor	30%
Food Portion Size	27%
Parking Facilities	26%
Handling of Reservations	20%
Restaurant is Spacious	14%
Prompt Handing of Complaints	13%
Sells Draft Beer	11%
Charcoal Grilled Steaks	9%
Other	2%

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Table 3 presents the fundamental property 1 results =  
Pr (E)=  $\frac{\text{number of outcomes in E}}{N}$ , see (Goldstein, Lay, & Schneider, 1984) (p. 343).

**N**