

Diners spend more when menus don't use dollar signs

December 9 2009

(PhysOrg.com) -- Restaurant patrons tend to spend more money when they select their items from menus that don't use dollar signs, reports a new Cornell study.

Diners in an "upscale casual" [restaurant](#) spent an average of \$5.55 -- about 8 percent -- more when the menu did not use dollar signs, reports a Cornell study published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (28:1).

"Changing the menu typography is like picking the low-hanging fruit," says doctoral student Sybil Yang, who co-authored the study with Sheryl E. Kimes, professor of operations management at the School of Hotel Administration, and Mauro Sessarego of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. "The yield may not be large, but it is easy to do, and there is very little downside to form a typographical strategy for the menu," Yang said.

However, the researchers found no difference in spending when the prices were listed as numerals with dollar signs or were spelled out.

One possible reason why diners spend less when the word "dollars" or the dollar sign is used is that "references to dollars, in words or symbol, reminds people of the 'pain of paying,'" said Kimes, the Singapore Tourism Board Distinguished Professor of Asian Hospitality Management at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration.

The researchers based their conclusions on a study of 201 diners at a café at the Culinary Institute of America. Diners were randomly given one of the three menus, on which prices were written as numerals with the dollar sign; as numerals without the dollar sign; or spelled out. For example, the price was listed either as 20, \$20 or twenty dollars.

More information: The study is available free from the Center for Hospitality Research at www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/reports/2009.html .

Provided by Cornell University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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