

UT professor helps develop DinEX scale to measure restaurant appeal

January 13 2011

What is it that makes you want to return to a restaurant again and again?

The food? The service? Atmosphere?

Sure.

But according to research spearheaded by John Antun, associate professor in the Department of Retail, Hospitality and Tourism and director of the Culinary Institute at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Robert E. Frash Jr., chair of the HRT department at the College of Charleston (S.C.), there are two more factors that must be added to mix: the [social experience](#) and the availability of healthy menu options.

Antun and Frash Jr. collaborated with UT assistant professors Wanda Costen and Rodney Runyan to develop a 20-item scale called DinEX that can accurately predict whether diners will like a [restaurant](#) and return to it. Their research is being published in the current issue of the quarterly Journal of Foodservice Business Research.

"Given the research we did to develop and test DinEX, we're confident that this is the new generation of restaurant rating systems," Antun said. "Food, service and atmosphere have always been critical factors in a restaurant's success, but recent literature suggests restaurants have become a significant social outlet for people. And our research showed us diners also rank 'health' high among the factors that will determine

whether or not they'll return to a restaurant."

Antun said DinEX can be used by restaurateurs to more accurately focus their marketing efforts, to build more fruitful relationships with their customers and to measure evolving dining trends in the marketplace and in their customers' priorities. In addition, he said, DinEx will be a useful tool for real estate professionals seeking the efficacious placement of restaurant properties.

The authors said a tool like DinEX can be especially helpful to businesspeople when tough economic conditions have forced people to curtail dining out.

According to the National Restaurant Association, the foodservice industry serves more than 130 million meals every day and people spend an average of 48 percent of their food dollars outside the home -- nearly double the amount spent 50 years ago. Yet, restaurant sales growth in the U.S. has been on the decline since 2004 and, for the first time, eating places are expected to see a negative 1.2 percent real growth change from 2008 to 2009.

The researchers assembled a small panel of restaurant owners and operators from several regions of the U.S. and asked each member to list "guest expectations" in the areas of food, service, atmosphere and social connectedness, as well as any other area they felt germane. Their list of 108 items was used to develop the first draft of a survey.

Six focus groups – three groups of restaurant professionals and three groups of restaurant customers – were then assembled to take the 108-item survey and critique it. The results produced a revamped 100-item survey.

The survey was then tested on the public and the results helped the

researchers pare it down to 39 items. Finally, UT's Social Science Research Institute used the survey during a nationwide telephone poll.

In the end, the researchers trimmed the survey to 20 questions, making it "efficient and yet comprehensive" in measuring the five key desires of restaurant patrons: food, service, atmosphere, social and health.

"This small number of items will allow the scale to be readily utilized in almost any foodservice setting and, as such, be more willingly accepted by a greater percentage of the foodservice industry for which it was conceived," Antun said.

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Citation: UT professor helps develop DinEX scale to measure restaurant appeal (2011, January 13) retrieved 18 July 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2011-01-ut-professor-dinex-scale-restaurant.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.