

Gender and Reference Groups in Food Consumption Patterns Formatting: A Case Study in the Erskine College Cafeteria

Robert Guang Tian, Tami Boyce, Pamela Henry, and Pratik Shrivastava¹

Abstract:

Many factors play roles in food choice. Gender is one of the most influential factors, but many other circumstances and situations also affect a person's food consumption decisions. This paper examines how gender, along with consumer perception, attitude, and reference groups, can influence consumer behavior in the specific food service site of a college cafeteria.

Introduction

Marketers seek to understand the differences in consumption patterns between men and women and use these differences to help them better position their products. Although the prevalence of dual-income households generated many changes in gender roles, in consumer science gender is still one of the most important variables in understanding consumer-behavior differences (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000). This is particularly true of food consumption habits and patterns; in fact, the importance of food consumption in understanding human culture lies precisely in its infinite variability. Although food is mainly used to satisfy hunger and meet nutritional needs, eating together can promote family unity and denote ethnic, regional, and even national identity. Moreover, food can be used socially to develop friendships, provide hospitality, and show social status or prestige. It can even be used to control the behaviors of others (Asp 1998; Chang 1977)

Males and females generally differ greatly in terms of food consumption habits and patterns that are components of culture; these differences comprise an important area for the study of consumer behavior (Asp 1999; Chang 1977; Doern and Kates 1998). Males, on average, consume more traditional, "hearty" foods such as meatloaf and sloppy Joes, and enjoy cooking outside on a grill; females tend to prefer "lighter" foods such as white chicken meat and turkey products. In addition, females are much more likely to be concerned about their weight, and this awareness is reflected in their choice of foods (McCue 1996).

Many gender related food consumption research studies have been conducted in consumer science. One such research project, conducted by S.

Stephenson (1994), aimed at identifying male and female food consumption patterns and preferences. She indicated that the fundamental differences that existed between men and women extended to their food choices as well. For instance, men liked to visit "male" kinds of restaurants such as bars, sports bars, and steak houses while women preferred to visit "female" establishments such as self-serve buffets and family oriented deli restaurants.

In other gender related food consumption research, B.C. Bock and R.B. Kanarch (1995) pointed out that in our society eating behavior carries many stereotypical associations with it. This is largely due to the fact that society has dissimilar expectations of the importance of slimness for men and women. Society accordingly formats paradoxical views about what comprises acceptable behaviors for men and women in terms of food consumption. The researchers indicated that an individual consumer's concern with his or her appearance had a reverse influence on his or her meal size; the higher the individual's concern for appearance, the more he or she tended to decrease meal size.

Bock and Kanarch's findings also suggested that females usually cared more about appearance than males and, thus, tended to eat less than males. Bock and Kanarch also found that individuals who chose smaller meal sizes were usually perceived by males and females alike to be "neater" than those with larger sized meals; that if a male and female ate the same amount the male was perceived as eating less; and that eating behavior indicated perceptions of attractiveness which carried a greater weight on the perceptions of women than those of men. The explanations for these perceptions could be related to the social and domestic roles that males and females are supposed to enact

according to social traditions and norms.

Previous research has provided an excellent foundation for identifying the impact of gender differences on consumer perceptions and consumption patterns of food in society. However, additional research is needed to better understand the effects of gender in particular communities (e.g., college students) in terms of food consumption. Many consumer behavior related concepts and theories, such as consumption motivation, the influence of friends on consumer behavior, and the influence of gender on consumer behavior, could be tested in food service sites (Doern and Kates 1998; Goffman 1959; Leidner 1993; McCarty et. al. 1990; Mano and Davis 1990; Schau and Gilly 1997; Tian 2000).

This study is designed to test our assumptions about the potential influences that gender and reference groups might generate on consumer behavior in terms of food consumption in the cafeteria of a small, rurally located college. The paper begins with a discussion of the study and the methodology employed, followed by a presentation of the data and the articulation of the main findings in terms of gender influences on consumer behavior, and ends with a summary and concluding remarks. It is important to note that the subject of this study is not a “male/female” population in absolute, but rather a well-contextualized “male/female” population in terms of modernity, identity, and social status.

The Study and the Methodology

This study, through an anthropological approach, presents an exploratory descriptive examination of gender influences on college students’ perception and attitude formatting as well as reference group effects at a campus food service site. The case study was designed to examine the process of college students’ food consumption and social interactions in the public place of an independent college’s cafeteria in which more than 300 female students and 200 male students eat their meals on a daily basis. Erskine College is located in Due West, South Carolina, in a rural area of a small town with about 1,500 residents. Having a number of antebellum buildings, both the town and the college are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. About 80 percent of the students are from South Carolina; most of the remaining 20 percent are from the nearby states around South Carolina. The

dining room is operated on a 21 or 15 meals-per-week basis. The Student Senate Committee on Food Services works closely with ARAMARK, which manages the college dining facilities and grill area. The college subscribes to the philosophy that a wide of variety of foods be served at each meal, with unlimited servings. One special meal each week and one festive meal each month are arranged to meet the nutritional needs of academic and student life. In addition to the college’s cafeteria there are two privately run food services in town and a fast food service, Erskine College Canteen, which is located on campus.

Originally, this study was designed as a term project for an undergraduate course in consumer behavior. The instructor employed a unique methodology which he termed a ‘psycho-anthropological approach’ to aid understanding about consumer behavior (Tian 2000). Based on literature review and our own real life experience, we started the study with assumptions that males and females may have a different biological make-up of taste buds; however, their eating preferences may not be fully explained as biological effects. Social, cultural, and psychological issues may also play some roles in how gender affects eating patterns. We assumed that men look primarily for a hearty meal that will satisfy their appetite after a day of physical exertion and exercise, while women tend to “calorie count” and think about the nutritional value of a food item before they eat it. Moreover, females may have a tendency to eat less in front of males in order to project a feminine image.

Although our assumptions were made with certain bases, we were not sure that they would apply to the particular food site. While many factors play roles in the effects of gender on consumer behavior, for the eating preferences in this case we would focus on three concepts: consumer attitudes, perception, and reference groups with special attention paid to the differing eating habits and preferences of males and females. Differences in food choices, quantities of food portions, and behaviors were noted to make inferences concerning food choice for the gender as a whole. To fulfill these tasks the authors employed an anthropological approach in the study.

The anthropological approach encompassed both a way of viewing the world and techniques for understanding that world. Following anthropological direction, the authors individually carried out

participant observation of consumer behavior at the cafeteria as regular customers for about ten weeks. During that period the authors not only observed consumer behavior with an emphasis on the differences between males and females, but also kept a record of anthropological data on the manner in which the observed food consumers presented themselves in the college cafeteria which was deemed by the authors as a specific social stage and cultural site (Goffman 1959).

Observations were made of seating arrangements, food preferences, overall attitudes, food choice, with whom the students sat, and the conversations conducted during the eating period. A very small close-ended survey was administered during the research; 37 males and 21 females were randomly selected to answer the questionnaire. In addition, more in-depth interviews were carried out with nine students: four males and five females. The surveys helped develop statistical (quantitative) results, while the interviews helped provide a qualitative method of research. To gather more information, the authors also conducted personal interviews with the two cafeteria managers who served as excellent resources for insight into student attitudes and behaviors. One of the authors has conducted some follow-up studies by making more observations and more interviews after the initial research project was finished.

Findings and Discussion

The theory of consumer perception is one of the most important aspects in understanding consumption behavior in the cafeteria. Consumer perception involves many concepts which can be associated with behavior in the cafeteria such as sensation, the differential threshold, perceptual selection, perceptual interpretation, and consumer imagery. Psychological bases of students' perceptions develop in the students' minds into positive or negative images of the cafeteria. During the research stage we found out that what the Erskine College students thought about the cafeteria adversely affected their consumption of food and their related behaviors.

As diverse individuals, each student tends to see the cafeteria in his or her own special way. Ten students can view the cafeteria at the same time, and each will report different things. For instance, it was observed during a lunch period on September 28, 2000,

that the cafeteria was very crowded because chapel had just been dismissed. A group of four girls seemed to have no patience to wait in a long line for a meal; they began to help themselves with salads first and then sat down together. One of the girls had a salad and a small bowl of oriental noodles on her tray; she sampled the noodles and seemed to enjoy them. Immediately upon her finishing the noodles she got another bowl of noodles. Her response prompted two other girls at the table to try the noodles as well. This observation indicates that sensory receptors – the human organs that perform functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, and taste – play very influential roles when a student makes his or her choice of food. According to the student survey, most students base their judgment about the cafeteria on the quality of the food. If the food does not satisfy students' standards they develop a negative image of the cafeteria (Table 1).

Male and female students have different perceptions of the cafeteria; they develop their views based on perceptual selection. Based on our investigation, students (males and females alike) are influenced by past experiences in the cafeteria. In order to change that influence there must be a significant change in the student's perception. Perceptual selection makes students see some things and ignore others. Observations indicate that male students view the food in the cafeteria as a means to end hunger, and female students see food in the cafeteria as a tool for survival. For instance, during the breakfast on September 20, 2000, three males and three females were observed eating together. Each male student had one plate of grits and eggs, while each girl had one bowl of cereal and a doughnut. All six observed subjects drank milk; but it is interesting that all three males drank 2-percent milk while all three females drank skim milk. We assume that the reason for the females to choose skim milk rather than 2-percent milk is because skim milk contains less fat than does the 2-percent milk; therefore, in the females' perception, the skim milk is more suitable for them to consume in order to maintain their physical attractiveness.

We observed that most male students eat anything, regardless of health concerns, whereas female students pay particular attention to the availability of healthful foods. We determined, via interviews, that students' perceptual selection is based on past experience and their needs and desires at the time of a meal. Male students usually do not pay much attention to the

physical attributes of the food that the cafeteria provides. Female students are concerned more with the quality of food and its nutritional value. As one of the female student told one of the authors, "I am not a food machine to simply intake anything to fill my stomach; besides, you know that food quality is very

Table 1. Selected Observations and Interpretations

Date and Meals Observed	Behaviors Observed	Interpretation
Breakfast Sep. 29, 2000	Members of the same athletic teams sit with each other at the same tables during mealtimes.	Athletes spend a lot of time together; they are a type of subculture on campus, and they tend to behave similarly
Breakfast Oct. 2, 2000	A boyfriend was observed eating the same thing that his girlfriend always eats.	The boyfriend has been influenced by the behaviors of his girlfriend.
All three meals Oct. 3, 2000	A friend influenced another friend; when a girl saw what her friend was eating, she went back through the line and got the same thing.	Reference groups are important. A friend must trust the judgment of another friend if they are willing to try the same type of foods.
Lunch Oct. 4, 2000	The tennis team ate together before a match. The coach suggested eating a light meal, so their breakfast consisted of cereal, bagels, and orange juice.	Perhaps the members of the team were hungry, but at the coach's suggestion, they ate only a light breakfast. They realized a lighter breakfast would contribute to a better performance during their match.
Breakfast Oct. 5, 2000	A mixed sorority group ate together; the males ate dessert while the females ate fruit.	Members of the same organizations tend to spend most of their spare time together. Perhaps the girls felt they would be perceived as more "feminine" if they skipped desert and instead ate fruit, a much healthier alternative.
Dinner Oct. 10, 2000	A female student brings her own peanut butter and cheese into the cafeteria.	This girl perceives her peanut butter and cheese as superior to that in the cafeteria. Her behavior indicates a learned attitude that she would rather bring in the specific brands of peanut butter and cheese for which she has acquired a taste than to eat the peanut butter and cheese provided in the cafeteria.

<p>Lunch Oct. 16, 2000</p>	<p>A girl making peanut butter toast commented that every time she eats something with peanut butter, other people at the table remark how good it looks and each fixes for their own a snack with peanut butter.</p>	<p>This is an example of peer influence. Perhaps the others at the table were not previously thinking about making a peanut butter snack, but once the girl came to the table with her meal, the others saw and smelled the peanut butter, and they decided they wanted a peanut butter snack as well.</p>
--------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 2. Claimed Three Types of Food Liked Most: Males vs. Females

<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
Items	Frequency	Items	Frequency
Country-fried Steak	3	Sizzling Salads	4
Chicken Sandwich	2	Chicken Pot-pie	3
Sizzling Salads	2	Burgers	2
Grilled Cheese	1	Chicken and Rice Soup	1
Corndogs	1	Fried Okra	1
Chicken Wings	1	Macaroni and Cheese	1
Sweet and Sour Chicken	1	Pizza	1
Tortellini	1	Sandwiches	1
		Fruit	1
Total	8	Total	9
	12		15

important for one's life. Given the varieties of items to choose from, why not to pick the best to enjoy?" She claimed, "I guess most of girls hold the same opinion as I do, if you stop and ask them as well." A male student told the same author that he is less willing to wait in a long line to get the food with the best quality. As he put it, "So long as I have enough food with the nutrition my body needs to keep me healthy it will be fine for me. . . . I usually try not to be very picky in terms of my food quality but rather food that can last longer in my stomach so that I will not feel hungry too soon after my meal." Like the girl student, he also claimed that what he said would be most male students' opinion.

The survey data indicated the same finding; for instance, among 21 surveyed female students only five admitted that they normally get seconds, while 29 out of the 37 surveyed male students partake in seconds on a regular basis. Generally, male students tend to eat larger meals than do female students. However, 17 out of the 21 surveyed female students eat dessert regularly while only 18 out of the 37 surveyed male students eat dessert following their meal. This finding suggests that perhaps women prefer a regular sized meal and something sweet while men would rather eat a larger, more filling meal than dessert.

In a follow-up study conducted by one of the authors, the data collected from interviewed students indicated that many differences existed in terms of perceptions of food and food consumption between male students and female students. For instance, when asked what are their three types of favorite foods, the

male students tended to report the foods with meat, while female students tended to report food that contains less meat but more vegetables (Table 2).

Interestingly, when asked what types of food they perceived as mainly for females, both male and female students reported items that were almost identical (Table 3); when asked what types of food they perceived as mainly for males (except steak), the male students reported items that female students did not report while the female students reported items that male students did not report (Table 4). This finding suggests that, although both male and female students perceive that certain types of food are gender oriented, they might perceive it with some bias; for example, four out of the five interviewed female students reported Corndogs as a male type of food, but none of the male students reported it (although one of the four interviewed male students reported Corndogs as one of his preferred foods). On the other hand, while two out of the four interviewed male students reported salads as one of their favorite foods, neither male nor female students perceived that salad is a male type of food.

The perception a student has of the cafeteria differs among individual students and is correlated with gender in certain degrees; some regard the cafeteria as a place for socializing, while some treat it strictly as a place to eat. It is interesting to find out that female students tend to socialize in the cafeteria, while male students mostly tend to just eat and leave. For instance, it was observed during dinner on September 14, 2000, that six males enjoyed multiple platefuls of food and had many drinks, all of which they consumed.

They watched television while eating, and often talked very loudly and boisterously.

Table 3. Perceived Three Types of Food for Female: Males vs. Females

<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
Items	Frequency	Items	Frequency
Salads	4	Sizzling Salads	5
Cereal	2	Sandwiches	3
Bagels	2	Ice Cream	2
Ice Cream	2	Vegetables	1
Pitas	1	Soups	1
Vegetables	1	Pitas	1
		Fruits	1
		Bagels	1
Total	6	Total	8
	12		15

Table 4. Perceived Three Types of Food for Male: Males vs. Females

<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
Items	Frequency	Items	Frequency
Steak	2	Corndogs	4
Meat	2	Sloppy Joe's	3
Ribs	2	Chicken Wings	2
Baked Potato	1	Hotdogs	2
Beans	1	Steak	1
Eggs	1	Hamburgers	1
Veal	1	Pizza	1
Dessert	1	Cereal	1
Total	8	Total	8
	12		15

Meanwhile, three female students at the end of the table each had a moderate amount of food and finished it all but did not partake in seconds or dessert. They sat huddled together and talked quietly, seeming to be somewhat reserved. The surveys revealed some useful information on this issue. For example, only three out of 21 surveyed females usually dined with a group of all females, while nine out of 37 surveyed males said they ate with all males. We observed that most male sports teams tended to congregate at mealtimes, usually in the same area in the cafeteria, while most girls spread out and sat with a mixed group.

Attitude is another highly scrutinized variable in consumer behavior studies. Attitudes affect behaviors from consumer purchasing patterns to students'

conduct in the school cafeteria. Attitudes are learned predispositions formed as a result of direct experience. They can be learned in various fashions, such as from exposure to advertising, direct marketing, word-of-mouth, or direct experience. Attitudes are consistent, but they are not permanent; they can be changeable (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000). There were particular attitudes prevalent in the cafeteria. Everyone had his or her unique attitude and outlook on life; this held true as well for the college students who ate in the cafeteria. On an individual scale, diners in the cafeteria seemed to value the opinions of their friends. If a friend or otherwise trusted source sampled a "questionable" item and declared it good, others would be much more likely to try that item than they would have been without that external influence (Table 1).

One phenomenon observed during the course of the study was that when a student came to the table with his or her meal, other students might be curious about a particular item on the tray. If the student sampled the food and reported it to be good, other students, although previously skeptical, would get a portion of that food item for themselves. This is particularly true of the female students; for example, observation of lunch on September 28, 2000, illustrated that if it were not for the positive feedback from the girl, the others would have been less likely to try the noodles on their own. Such a phenomenon can be attributed to the influence of external forces on behaviors.

Based on our observations, people possess individual opinions that result in specific behaviors, but they can be easily influenced by the actions of others. If a person hears positive or negative remarks from a trusted, reliable source, those statements will more than likely have an impact on the formation of their own opinions. Accordingly, we assume that consumers can learn to adapt to certain behaviors; that learning process is quickened when a consumer observes an influential person behaving in the same manner. In a group setting, if a consumer notices several members of the group behaving in a certain manner, he will more than likely feel more confident about adopting that particular behavior himself. If the students had not been sitting at the same table as the girl who sampled the noodles, they most likely would not have been motivated to try them. However, they observed a reliable "source" eating the noodles, and when she was pleased with the dish, a few girls went as a group to sample the noodles for themselves.

It was observed that the cafeteria provided a small basket filled with packets of fat-free salad dressings as a healthier alternative to the regular salad dressings. When the basket was emptied, a few girls concocted their own fat-free dressing by mixing mustard and honey together. They made their own fat-free dressing to top a salad or sandwich. This behavior represented an attitude that appears to be somewhat prevalent, particularly among female students. Perhaps these girls perceived fat-free dressings to be significantly more healthful than the normal dressings. If there were no fat-free dressings in the basket, many girls have been seen mixing their own fat-free dressing consisting of mustard and honey. Since these girls go to the trouble of mixing a special sauce instead of using the regular dressings that are available, the girls must have

acquired a learned attitude that a fat-free dressing is much more beneficial to their health and diet. Perhaps some of the girls learned by observing other girls engaging in that behavior.

Attitudes toward the cafeteria as a whole can be ascribed depending on how the majority of students behave. Such prevailing attitudes can be observed, but it was thought that the managers might be more qualified to comment on the overall state-of-mind in the dining hall. When questioned in an interview concerning current attitude trends in the cafeteria, the two managers responded quite positively. They had observed a visible excitement displayed by students concerning the food selection and quality. Of course, despite the primarily positive feedback from the student body, there is inevitably a smaller subset of students who display consistently poor attitudes toward the quality and variety of food served in the cafeteria.

It seems that if a core group of students, particularly upperclassmen, display a consistently positive attitude in the cafeteria, they will influence underclassmen and other students in a positive manner. If incoming freshmen hear from the upperclassmen how the food quality and variety has improved, they will more than likely follow their lead and respond positively to the meals provided in the cafeteria. In this perspective we found no difference between male students and female students, although we are not sure of the reasons. The rationale might be that attitude formation plays an extremely important role in consumer behavior particularly when a large group of peers are together, such as in a college setting.

Oftentimes, people behave quite differently alone than in a group. Students may have formed their own attitudes before arriving on the campus and dining in the cafeteria, but their attitudes can, nonetheless, be reshaped as they eat with their peers in a group setting. This can be demonstrated by our observations on reference group influence. For anthropologists, a reference group is any person or group that serves as a point of comparison (or reference) for an individual forming either general or specific values, attitudes, or a specific guide for behavior (Tian 1999). These groups influence others and serve as a "frame of reference" for consumers in their purchase or consumption situation. A college setting is made up largely of friendship groups (a type of reference group). Besides family, friends are most likely to influence an individual's

consumption decisions.

Because the students all attended the same school and were relatively close to the same age, they created the perfect scenario for affective reference groups. For instance, during the dinner on October 10, 2000, a girl saw what her friend had made with a variety of different foods. After the friend commented on the good taste, the girl made the same entree for herself. Had she not seen her friend make the combination and heard the positive feedback, she might never have made it herself. The same scenario happened many times throughout the study. These observations support the theory of a strong reference group influence on consumer behavior. Simple comments made to others in a group can affect the decisions of a consumer, in this case a student dining in the cafeteria. With the encouragement of her friend, the girl made a choice she otherwise probably would not have made.

During this study it was also observed that most students sat with the same people every day. This was further verified by the responses in a survey passed out to a large percent of the students and by personal interviews with the management of the cafeteria. Because of this repetition in seating arrangements, the students became very comfortable around those people and developed close friendships. Close friends are considered to have high credibility and are likely to persuade others easily within the environment of the cafeteria. Therefore, when a student made new observations about food and shared them with the group, his or her close friends were likely to listen. This has also been observed in boy/girl dating relationships. During lunch on October 16, 2000, a male was observed eating what his girlfriend had combined many times before. Because it was an unusual combination, the correlation was easily identified. Extended time spent with friends often has a direct effect on eating habits. Close friends strongly affect food decisions (Table 1).

The survey data supports the same findings. For instance, the survey reported that 29 out of the 37 surveyed male students and 19 out of the 21 surveyed female students usually sit with the same group of people. This fact highlights the importance of reference groups. If the same group consistently eats together, the members will more than likely influence each other's eating habits and preferences. It is interesting that when females and males sit together only one out of the

37 surveyed male students confessed to eating differently in mixed company, while 10 out of the 21 female students surveyed admitted to modifying their eating habits in a mixed group. One girl commented, "I tend to eat less with a mixed group," while another said, "I can't eat in front of people, I don't know!"

In short, female students tend to be self-conscious when eating in front of males; they want to be perceived by the males as "feminine." Seven out of nine interviewed males and females report that their eating habits do not deviate when in mixed company. However, one male remarked that when eating with all males, "guys don't have to have manners." A female commented that she tended to "eat neater and less" when males are present at the table, and she is more conscious of her behavior. Furthermore, she admitted to finishing her meal early if everyone else at the table was done eating. This reinforces the importance of group influences. She does not want to be perceived as a pig; therefore, when others stop eating, she stops also, regardless of whether or not she is full.

Conclusions and Management Implementations

Understanding consumer behavior presents a great challenge. Consumer behavior is a broad subject, and we have only used a small portion of its theories to explain our observations and findings. More theories and concepts could be used, but we picked three that best suited our study and, thus, could be applied to understanding the behavior that occurs within the walls of Erskine College Cafeteria: consumer perception; reference groups; and consumer attitudes, with special attention paid to the differing eating habits and preferences of males and females. Our findings have shown that, in general, male and female students behave differently in the cafeteria, and their image of the cafeteria affects their behavior. Consumption behavior is altered due to the positive and negative images of the cafeteria that the students have in their minds.

The study helped us realize how and why students behave the way they do in the cafeteria. College cafeteria management can implement the concepts of consumer perception, reference groups, and consumer attitude to understand and respond to the consumption behaviors of students and change the image students have of the cafeteria. Implementation of the research findings will result in increased delivery of quality food

products and services to the students.

The cafeteria management can use consumer perception theories to change the negative image students have of the cafeteria. Management must recognize the expectations of the students and strive to meet their standards. Students should be solicited for feedback regarding the quality of food and service in the cafeteria and how they can be improved to better meet their needs.

The importance of reference groups must be recognized. Management needs to realize how great an influence reference groups can have and use this knowledge in their business. If students see that the average consumer is happy with his or her selection, they are more likely to feel satisfied, too. Knowing that consumers are open to new suggestions, the management can let students help advertise new combinations using signs around the cafeteria. These edible suggestions are likely to catch at least one person's eye, which will have a ripple effect on others. In this way management can advertise foods they would like to see consumed and observe its appeal.

Consumer attitudes are consistent; however, attitudes are learned and can be changed. Management should strive to create a positive first impression with the students at the beginning of the year. They could have a special "theme" meal the first week of the semester as well as a cookout and perhaps a special ice cream buffet for dessert. If the managers plan special activities and events at the beginning of school, students respond positively. They will be very excited, and that excitement will translate into a positive attitude that will be sustained throughout the course of the year.

Notes

1. Dr. Robert Guang Tian is an Associate Professor of Business Administration at Erskine College; all the other authors are students majoring in Business at Erskine College.

References Cited

Asp, E.H.

- 1999 Factors Affecting Food Decisions Made by Individual Consumers. *Food Policy* 24: 287-294.

Bock, B.C., and R.B. Kanarch

- 1995 Women and men are what they eat: The effects of gender and reported meal size on perceived characteristics. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 33(1-2):109.

Chang, C.K.

- 1977 *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Doern, R.R., and S.M. Kates

- 1998 The Social Meanings of Drinking: Strengthening the Social Bonds of Restaurant Employees. *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 25: 481-485.

Mitchell J.S.

- 1990 Changes after taking a college basic nutrition course. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 90(7):955.

McCue, N.

- 1996 Sex Appeal. *Prepared Foods* 165(8):45.

no author

- 1999 Men too macho to eat healthy. *Chemist & Druggist* Sept. 1999: p. VI.

Schiffman, Leon G., and Leslie Lazar Kanuk,

- 2000 *Consumer Behavior*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice.

Stephenson, S.

- 1994 Does sex really matter? Do men and women think differently about food? *Restaurants and Institutions* 104(26):133.

Tayce, E.J., and R. Ingram Gassenheimer

- 1999 The Necessity of a Market Segmentation Strategy in a University Food Service Setting. *The Journal of The National Association of College & University Food Services* Volume 21.

Tian, R.G.

- 2000 Understanding Consumer Behavior: A Psycho-Anthropological Approach. *North American Journal of Psychology* 2(2).

1999 *Canadian Chinese, Chinese Canadians:
Coping and Adapting in North America.*
Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Weiglein A.C., D. Brochetti, and E.S. Duncan
2000 College-Age Women's Perceptions of
Dairy Foods. *The Forum* 5(1).