

Do loyalty customers feel manipulated by preservice suggestive tipping?

A moderated mediation model.

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 2024

A THESIS

submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Hospitality Management
College of Health and Human Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2025

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ABSTRACT

Pre-service tipping is a new and growing trend of tipping in which consumers pay tips upon order placement, specifically before the fulfillment of service (Warren et al., 2021). Fan et al. (2024) investigated that the implementation of suggestive tipping can nudge consumers to tip. Research in tipping behavior has primarily focused on post-service tipping: There is a need to focus on how suggestive tipping formats influence consumers' tipping behavior in the preservice tipping phase. Warren et al. (2021) found whether preservice tipping led consumers to question whether the service provider had manipulative intentions. Furthermore, preservice tipping creates high levels of uncertainty (Wen et al., 2024), where consumers have not yet been served. When loyalty is high, consumers tend to trust the information provided by the restaurant (Chang et al., 2013). The purpose of this study is to investigate suggestive tipping format and consumers' loyalty interactively influence their perceived manipulation. This study also examines consumers' perception of how manipulation mediates the interactive effect of the tipping format, loyalty, and willingness to tip. The objective of this study is to examine the moderated effect of customers' loyalty (LOY) on the mediating effect of perceived manipulateness (PM) on the relationship between suggestive tipping (ST) and willingness to tip (WTT).

Drawing on the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), the results suggest that when consumers' loyalty is low, all three formats, which are the following: F#1 is that consumers are presented with only customary percentages for a given amount of the check (15%, 18%, and 20%). The second format (F#2) presents not only the customary percentage but also the tip dollar amounts based on the tip percentage: 15% (\$2.25), 18% (\$2.70), and 20% (\$3.00). In the last format (F#3), consumers are presented with customary percentages along with the total amount of the bill after tip—15% (\$17.25), 18% (\$17.70), and 20% (\$18.00)—of suggestive tipping is

perceived as manipulative by consumers, leading to lower willingness to tip. However, when consumers' loyalty is high, the tipping suggestion format with both percentage and tip dollar amount was perceived as less manipulative, which results in a higher willingness to pay. The results suggest that loyal consumers would still prefer the calculation assistance format with percentage and dollar amount in the preservice context. We argue that when the information displayed is written and clearly expressed, consumers feel less manipulated and are more likely to tip more. The findings of this study carry several important implications for restaurant management and customer behavior. First, preservice tipping is perceived as inherently risky, even among loyal consumers. Restaurant managers may apply these insights by strategically designing tipping suggestions that display both percentage and tip dollar amounts, which could enhance consumer motivation to tip more generously. Second, the study highlights the importance of consumer loyalty, as loyal consumers tend to feel less manipulated when presented with suggestive tipping amounts. Restaurant practitioners should prioritize strengthening their loyalty programs, aiming to encourage repeat patronage where consumers are more receptive to preservice tipping suggestions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for bringing me to Kansas State University. My education and time have been a great privilege, and that is not to be omitted. I am thankful to everyone that God has put in my life throughout these past 5 years: everyone who was with me during times of trials, times of mourning, and times of great joy. Truly, I thank you for all that you have done for me.

I thank my Major Professor and friend, Dr. Yue Teng-Vaughan, for his guidance, belief, and perseverance and for pushing me to put in the work. Of course, Dr. Yue-Teng Vaughan wasn't the only professor I've had at KSU. Therefore, thank you to all the other passionate professors who have made this journey such a delightful time.

Thank you to Vanetta Geiger for embracing the boy I was when coming to college and making sure that I would be taken good care of at my second home, Kansas State University. Thank you for your care, support, and love.

I wouldn't be the person I am today without my brothers, best friends, and roommates. Thank you, guys, for challenging me in my walk, thank you for all these wonderful late-night conversations, and all our great time playing "pig," and so much more than these.

Thank you as well for this beautiful and united community that I have experienced through Christian Challenge. This has led me through so much growth. Thank you to all the godly leaders of this campus ministry who have nurtured my walk with Christ.

DEDICATION

I'm dedicating this work to my Father in heaven. All my work is done in His name, in times when I perform well or not, in the highs and lows of it. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23–24).

I also dedicate this work to my parents, Elżbieta and Christophe, who have pushed and supported me through all these years at K-State, leading me to write this thesis about a fascinating subject. They have loved me and cared for me since I was a child, and I'll always be grateful for their sacrifices.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is known for outstanding service to its customers, as shown in signs of kindness, serving characteristics, empathy, social skills, and many other qualities. In the restaurant industry, such acts and behaviors are usually rewarded in the form of a tip. The term “tip” is an abbreviation that means “To Insure Promptness” (Brenner, 2001), and tips are the main source of income for service providers, such as servers. Restaurants will most likely pay their servers the federal wage of \$2.13 (*Minimum Wage for Tipped Employees by State*, 2024). Therefore, tips are expected from guests so the server can earn a salary. While tipping is a form of payment for the server by the customers, Azar tested the theory that people wanted to control their service by giving tips to their servers. However, it was proven that they were a means of gratitude, empathy, and compassion for the service of the employee (Azar, 2006).

Tipping dates to the Roman Empire and may have originated even earlier. However, it is generally accepted that the medieval ages are the times when “tipping” started (Segrave, 1998). The extra coins were intended to show gratitude for the work the laborer or servant had done for their master or lord (Azar, 2004). When looking at today’s tipping culture, there have been many creative ways companies have implemented tipping, such as public transportation, Uber, or Lyft (Gibson, 2024). Suggestive tipping is nothing new, but we see it even more everywhere. We see it at the end of our bill in a restaurant, we see it in fast-food apps, such as Domino’s or Starbucks (Summers-Marcouillier, 2023), and delivery services, such as Uber Eats (Fan et al., 2024). When we put our thoughts and efforts into it, we realize that we are being asked to tip before any service is performed for us. Our interaction could be limited to an exchange with an employee or a couple of clicks on the selected app. The questions then arise, such as: how does this affect us?

Are we being pressured into tipping and spending more money? Is it reasonable to tip in those scenarios?

With the technological transformation, preservice tipping is a new growing trend of tipping that consumers pay the tips upon order placement, specifically before the fulfillment of service (Warren et al., 2021). Fan et al. (2024) investigated whether the implementation of suggestive tipping can nudge consumers to tip. Research on tipping behavior has primarily focused on post-service tipping; there is a need to focus on how suggestive tipping formats influence consumers' tipping behavior in the preservice tipping phase. Warren et al. (2021) found that preservice tipping led consumers to question whether the service provider had manipulative intentions. Furthermore, preservice tipping creates high levels of uncertainty (Wen et al., 2024), where consumers have not yet been served. Consumers are motivated to seek all useful cues to make decisions in a context of high uncertainty (Kramer, 1999). Suggestive tipping formats can influence tip amount through a heuristic cue to save consumers' efforts in determining the tipping amount. The calculation-assistance formats provide much higher information quality than the percentage (i.e., consumers know exactly how much they need to pay for the tips; (Karniouchina et al., 2008), which can make them feel more comfortable and less likely to be manipulated. Additionally, consumers' loyalty is likely to resolve the negative impact of preservice tipping on consumers' perceptions. When loyalty is high, consumers tend to trust the information provided by the restaurant (Chang et al., 2013). The purpose of this study is to investigate how the suggestive tipping format and consumers' loyalty interactively influence their perceived manipulateness. Further, this study aims to examine how consumers' perception of manipulation mediates the interactive effect of tipping format and loyalty on willingness to tip.

Justification

This study investigates the recent phenomenon of preservice tipping. Much of the research conducted on tipping has been predominantly around post-service tipping, not pre-service tipping. One of the core beliefs about tipping in general is that it said that customers can more fairly evaluate the service provided by the employees (Azar, 2005). One of the goals in general of tipping is to improve efficiency and social welfare. People also tip because they believe that the service provider should be shown gratitude for their good service. Customers want to reciprocate empathy, and gratitude to the waiters (Azar, 2005). Other researchers have studied the driving factors behind tipping and its impacts on restaurants (Whaley et al., 2019). Whaley et al. state that tipping behavior is influenced by the restaurant experience and how that behavior is contextual and subjective to each guest. In the study, he adds that almost everything in the experience of the guest at the restaurant influences the tipping decision, these factors could be the atmosphere, the quality, the staff, and much more (Whaley et al., 2019). Another topic that is explored in post-service tipping is why people should tip in the first place (Azar, 2007). Azar describes how tipping goes against many internal beliefs that when people give, they expect in return. However, tipping is not a gift, as Azar describes since they are not family or friends, nor a donation because it isn't associated with any organization.

There are no legal obligations to tip, however, it is assumed that people will tip no matter what. Here comes the confusion where there are studies that explore if people would rather get rid of tipping and apply service charges (Lynn, 2016), which is present in many other countries, such as France (ETIAS News & Information for Visitors Coming to Europe, n.d.). There are parts of the hospitality industry where tipping isn't permitted on-premises and the employees/servers receive a higher wage, these places are more private entities, such as some country clubs. People feel

pressured into giving because they create an image of themselves as well, and tipping is a generous thing to do (Azar, 2007). The flow of service has changed, and preservice tipping defies many of the post-service norms (Berry & Hoffman, 2023; Morewedge & Giblin, 2015). In post-service tipping, people are well acquainted with the service flow of a restaurant. The guest gets greeted and sits at a table, a server provides service, then the customer eats food and then assesses holistically the whole experience and tips based on what they experience. Research also has shown that tipping in a post-service context, people have gotten used to it, and has become a social norm to tip. Tipping is just the right thing to do (Viglia et al., 2019).

However, in preservice tipping, all these things are inverted. Guest coming to a restaurant or establishment that employs preservice tipping can't fairly evaluate the service as the whole process is reversed. People walk into a business of such, and they are greeted, taken an order, and asked to tip before any service is fulfilled. In most cases, customers after placing an order see the suggestive tipping screens and are nudged to tip their server. In contrast to post-service tipping the tip is at the end, here it is at the beginning. In turn, this leads to high levels of manipulateness towards the consumer and they feel pressured into tipping due to the uncertainties of the service nor the quality of the product that will come out (Warren, et al., 2021).

Hence, this paper explores the understudied field of how customers feel manipulated into preservice tipping when they are nudged by suggested tipping options before any service is performed for them (Fan et al., 2024). This is a very relevant topic today as more and more establishments employ such tipping methods that are assisted by more common point of sale systems (POS), such as Square or Toast, which leads to the overuse of digital tipping and leaves many people confused about where tipping is going. A recent shift has been the use of digital

tipping, which is a result of the digitalization of our world. Fewer and fewer people use real cash as debit or credit cards are a normal way to pay for all things. One major reason why systems such as Square or Toast (Kim, 2018; Lorsch, 2023) have been employing such methods of digital tipping is because of that switch from cash to digital, and coffee shops are removing the familiar tipping jars (Warren & Hanson, 2023). Additionally, it is the choice of the owners and users of the system to have the option of the suggested tipping display activated. However, this leads people to an uncomfortable way of tipping because, not only is the customer nudged to tip, but also employees are overlooking your every move and can see whether you tipped or not (Hanson & Warren, 2024). A significant statistic to look at when it comes to tipping is that the world has moved towards the usage of technology and now digital tipping is almost a third of all US tipping, which is the method we are using for this research.

This study takes a novel and timely direction by exploring how customer loyalty functions as a moderating variable in shaping consumers' perceptions of manipulateness and their subsequent willingness to tip in preservice contexts. While previous research has extensively examined the role of tipping prompts, suggestive tipping formats, and psychological reactance (e.g., Warren et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2024), few—if any—have investigated how individual differences in customer-brand relationships, specifically loyalty, influence these cognitive and emotional responses. The integration of loyalty as a moderator in this framework is both innovative and theoretically significant, as it provides a more nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms that guide consumer decision-making in modern, technology-mediated service encounters. Notably, the construct of loyalty has been widely studied in hospitality literature for its impact on repeat patronage, customer satisfaction, and lifetime value (Bowen & Shoemaker, 2003; Khan, 2013). However, its moderating effect—particularly in high-

uncertainty, digitally facilitated tipping environments—remains largely unexplored. This study fills that gap by showing how loyalty interacts with suggestive tipping formats to influence the degree to which consumers feel manipulated. The results indicate that loyal customers are less likely to perceive tipping prompts as coercive, especially when provided with calculation-assistance formats, likely due to their familiarity with the service process and trust in the establishment. This insight offers a critical contribution to both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, it suggests that loyalty does more than foster positive affect; it also plays a cognitive role by shaping how consumers interpret potentially ambiguous or intrusive prompts.

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer actionable implications for hospitality operators. By recognizing that loyal and non-loyal customers respond differently to tipping prompts, businesses can tailor their tipping interface strategies accordingly—for example, by designing more transparent and trust-reinforcing tipping displays for first-time patrons, while leveraging familiarity-based framing for repeat customers. Compared to earlier studies that treated tipping responses as uniform across all customer types, this research highlights how seemingly small but influential variables—such as loyalty status—can significantly alter consumer experiences and behavioral outcomes. Repeat customers, armed with prior knowledge and expectations, interpret the same tipping environment differently than new customers who are still forming impressions. This divergence underscores the importance of segmenting tipping strategies and designing context-sensitive service encounters that reduce perceived manipulation and support fair exchange. In doing so, the study not only contributes a new dimension to preservice tipping research but also provides a foundation for future work on how personalization and loyalty can improve consumer perceptions in digitally mediated hospitality transactions.

Significance

This study examines the recent shift in tipping culture—a trend increasingly recognized by major news outlets (e.g., NBC News, CBS News), widely discussed in public discourse, and now gaining growing attention in academic research. This study is different and unique because of the role of loyalty as a moderator and how it affects the perceived manipulateness that ultimately leads to a change in the customer's willingness to tip. It's a relevant subject as the goal of the hospitality industry is to make the experience the best possible for each customer and/or guest.

This brings many things to light and puts them in perspective. The first one is that this is an American phenomenon, and this is making news in many ways. The closest thing to preservice tipping that is present in other countries is service charges since they are already known that the customer will be added to their bill. Second, this leads to the mistrust from customers when engaging with the business in preservice tipping. Customers feel manipulated and as of right now, this is a statement that many people agree on (Warren et al., 2021). The way that customers are manipulated in preservice tipping is through suggestive tipping screens and the way that it is displayed matters and has a direct impact on individuals using those formats (Fan et al., 2022). This is a great study and expanding on loyalty adds to the literature about preservice tipping.

This paper aims to initiate a deeper exploration of preservice tipping by focusing on the human experience surrounding this evolving practice. As tipping increasingly occurs before service is rendered, many consumers report feeling pressured, manipulated, or guilted into tipping—sentiments that conflict with the core values of hospitality, which emphasize voluntary generosity and guest satisfaction. This study contributes to the growing academic discourse by

providing a timely examination of why preservice tipping has become so prominent in today's service environment and how it affects consumer psychology.

By shedding light on the emotional and cognitive tensions consumers face in these situations, the findings offer an important context for understanding the discomfort and uncertainty that often accompany preservice tipping decisions. The goal of this research is to help identify practical, evidence-based solutions that can be implemented by hospitality managers to create a fairer, more transparent, and guest-friendly tipping experience. In doing so, this study builds on prior work related to perceived manipulateness (Warren et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2024) and suggestive tipping strategies (Fan et al., 2022), while also making a unique contribution by introducing customer loyalty as a moderating variable. This added dimension provides new insights into how businesses can tailor tipping systems based on customer familiarity and trust, ultimately enhancing both consumer satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

Limitations of the Study

This study is not free of limitations. This study was conducted in an experimental setting, which may not fully capture real-world tipping behaviors. While this study was proven realistic by participants, it would be recommended for future research to employ field experiments in real-life restaurants that use preservice tipping settings to enhance external validity. Another limitation this study encounters is that it might not accurately display behavior as the participants are not during the scenario, which might return false results because they might appear as less willing to tip or more and not give in to social pressure. There is also no actual financial commitment to this experiment, which takes some pressure off their shoulders.

Furthermore, the study's sample was predominantly Caucasian (65.3%), with most participants aged 25–44 (61%) and having completed a 4-year college degree (40.5%). This demographic concentration may limit the generalizability of the findings to more diverse populations. Future research should aim to include a more heterogeneous sample across racial, age, and educational backgrounds to ensure the results apply to a broader range of consumers.

All of these limitations can be easily resolved by conducting a real-life experiment and asking strangers to participate in this study. When doing an in-person experiment, researchers would be able to encapsulate the behaviors of people as well as more of a raw state right after they engaged in preservice tipping. This will assist towards the goal of a heterogeneous sample as well as the possibility of conducting this experiment in different establishments.

Definition of Terms

App: Abbreviation for application: a computer program or piece of software designed for a particular purpose that you can download onto a mobile phone or other mobile device (Cambridge).

Empathy: The ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation (Cambridge).

Gratuity: A small amount of money for someone who has provided you with a service, in addition to the official amount and for their personal use (Cambridge).

Gratitude: The feeling or quality of being grateful (Cambridge).

Hospitality industry: The hospitality industry is a large subsection within the service industry and is comprised of four main areas: Food & beverage, travel & tourism, lodging, and recreation. (Insights, 2024)

Loyal: Firm and not changing in your friendship with or support for a person or an organization or in your belief in your principles (Cambridge).

Manipulative: A manipulative person tries to control people to their advantage (Cambridge).

Nudge: To encourage or persuade someone to do something in a way that is gentle rather than forceful or direct (Cambridge).

POS: Point of sale system: This can be defined as the place where a transaction takes place between a customer and a merchant (Pendrill, 2024).

Pre-service tipping: Upon order placement, specifically before the fulfillment of service (Warren et al., 2021)

Post-service tipping: To tip after all the service has been performed.

Server: A person who serves food in a restaurant (Cambridge).

Social pressure: the exertion of influence on a person or group by another person or group (Apa Dictionary of Psychology).

Suggestive tipping: Customers, usually after tipping in preservice tipping, are suggested a tip with the help of a screen (Fan et al., 2024).

Tip: To give someone who has provided you with a service an extra amount of money to thank them (Cambridge).

Tipping: The act of giving an amount of money to someone who has provided a service, especially in a hotel or restaurant (Cambridge).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

History and Evolution of Tipping

Roman Empire

It is not clear when tipping started. Some say that tipping started back during the times of the Roman Empire (Hemenway, 1993). However, it is more agreed that it started during the Middle Ages (Segrave, 1998) in the times of lords and servants, which consisted of lords giving a little extra money to their servants on top of their normal wage as an act of generosity and gratitude. However, more sources state that tipping was more apparent in England, more specifically during the 16th century (Brenner, 2001). In England, where it all began, signs were placed in coffee shops and pubs that contained the word “TIP,” which means “to ensure promptness.” These were strategically placed to entice people to tip as well; in return, they would receive quicker service from their servers. Europeans are the ones that have started this trend. Later, in the 19th century, it is said that high-income Americans who traveled to Europe in those times brought the habit of tipping back home just to prove that they had traveled and to show that they were familiar with European culture.

US Tipping History: Slavery

William R. Scott, the author of “The Itching Palm: A Study of the Habit of Tipping in America (1916), compared slavery with tipping. Slaves were by law servile; however, he describes how tip-takers voluntarily become servile, even in some places with a fee. In the past, restaurant owners would “hire” servers and pay them no money. The “employee” would fully earn their money based on their customers tipping actions. Servants use different strategies, such as flattery, to earn the most possible revenue from their customers, which has been passed on for generations and is what is present today.

Application of Tipping in the Service Industry

Americans mainly employ tipping as the method of income for the servers. Compared to other continents, in Europe (ETIAS News & Information For Visitors Coming To Europe, n.d.), different countries have different tipping cultures. Greece has a generally lower level of income, while a tip isn't obligated. It is well perceived as it supports the wages of the servers. In France, for instance, tips are not obligatory either because they earn a fair living wage, and in multiple restaurants and café, they include a service charge, which they call "service compris" which stands for "service included", of around 15% (Stimmler, 2023). Generally, in Asia, tipping is not common or required. Some countries, such as Japan, could even see it as offensive. However, in highly touristic areas of Asia (Patrick, 2024), a tip is common. Different countries have different cultures. In some, it is appreciated or is used as a sign of gratitude; in others, there are service charges applied to the check, or it is not well-seen.

While there are multiple jobs (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024) where tipping is appreciated or expected, only one of them pays a living wage for servers in the United States. In the restaurant industry, servers earn their income based on a check percentage that is entirely dependent on the customer's addition to the bill. Servers still use various methods to potentially increase their tips after they have completed all of the services. From start to finish, there are multiple touch points in their service to try and increase their tip since their wage and living are dependent on it. The restaurant industry is known for tipping after the service has been concluded. This was the most common method, apart from the case in England referred to earlier.

Tipping research Through the Ages

Tipping in the 1980s

In 1984, Micheal Lynn, a prominent researcher then and now on this subject from Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, was one of the few people who took an interest in the tipping system. At that time, only three papers had been published with only a few findings, which were about the tipping percentage, the number of people at the table influencing the tip amount, the attractiveness of the waiter or waitress, gender, and alcohol consumption. Some of the findings were that in the two studies conducted in 2 different class levels of restaurants, people tipped 15.6% (IHOP) and 15.5% (moderately high-price dinner house) of their bill (Lynn & Latané, 1984). They also noticed an inverse relationship in the first study, which was that the larger the group was, the smaller the tip would become, even when split. However, that did not matter in the moderately priced dinner house, most likely due to population. In 1985, a study was conducted in a restaurant where they were researching whether or not a customer would tip more if the customer was touched by their waitress (Stephen & Zweigenhaft, 1985). They had 112 pairs of customers, one male and one female. They created 3 different scenarios where in 28 cases, the female at the table was touched, another 28 where the male was touched, and 56 where none of them were touched. The interesting part of the interaction was that they avoided making eye contact. The results are fascinating as the average tip for females was 15%, for males 13%, and for no touch, it was 11%.

Tracey Taylor Woodland (1988) claims that 1 in 5 persons don't tip at all when they experience bad service. This study was done over the phone, asking more than a thousand individuals what their average was when tipping if they decreased the amount they tip when encountering poorer service, and what was their average when they tipped for bad service. The

average on all the responses was 12.64 percent of the bill. 38% of the respondents said that they would reduce their tip by 1 to 5 percent and 22% would leave no tip at all (Woodland, 1988).

Tipping in the 1990s

In the 1990s, Micheal Lynn and other collaborators, such as Kirby Mynier, researched various methods for servers to increase their tips. Since the income of service providers was and is solely tied to the tips given by the guests, it was important to know what methods were effective in gaining more income. The authors researched the “posture effect” by squatting down to the table, which was the main method used in this study. As a result, it led to better eye contact and showed an increased sense of care from the server. Furthermore, the result was that this squatting posture increased the tips of the server in this study. There were other potential underlying psychological factors that they didn’t get to explore but assumed were present (Lynn & Mynier, 1993).

Another study that explored whether a specific action would increase the tip of a server was if drawing a smiley face on the check would be beneficial. The study’s results were the following, when a female drew a smiling face, it would increase the amount of her tips by about 19%. However, for males, it was neutral or even had a “boomerang effect.” When males drew these faces, it decreased their tips. This is all because of gender perceptions and how people view them. Society believes it is more appropriate for females to employ this method but for males, it is less appropriate and perceived as weird and strange (Broverman et al., 1972).

Continuing the social studies and if specific gestures or behaviors changed the tipping amount provided by customers, Kimberly Garrity and Douglas Degelman (1990) dug into server introduction and how that affected the tip. Kim, the server at Charley’s Brown Buffet, was randomly assigned if she was going to introduce herself or not to her guests. After conducting

this experiment with 41 tables during brunch, which were all couples, she received significantly larger tips when she introduced herself. At a constant bill of \$23.11, the mean of her average tips received and not received were \$5.44 and \$3.49 respectively, which is a 23.4% increase (Garrity & Degelman, 1990). This proves that introducing herself is beneficial to a higher tip.

During that time, research started to address today's dilemmas. Lynn and Graves (1996) explored how tipping was slowly becoming one of today's debated subjects, whether a tip is an incentive/reward. The conclusion was that the tip should not be the leading motivation factor for servers, and it is not a measure of their performance. It was an important distinction because some of the managers would judge the quality of service by tips, which is a bad measure as people have different approaches.

Örn Bodvarsson and William Gibson conducted a study in 7 restaurants and surveyed nearly 700 diners and their first finding was that in every type of restaurant they surveyed, people tipped differently in all of them. The study was done across 4 different types of restaurants: coffee shops without alcohol, low-priced family restaurants with standard American menus and no alcohol, moderately priced, specialty menus and alcoholic beverages; and high-priced atmosphere/specialty restaurants with alcohol. Some of the results were fascinating as individuals who responded to the questions if they were "regulars" of that establishment tipped more than those who weren't. They also found that even though it is said that social pressures lead to higher tips, it was the opposite. When a table of more than 2 individuals was recorded, the tip rate decreased with the addition of each person, with some minor exceptions and amount difference, and when it was shown that lone diners were the best tippers.

Tipping in 2000s and 2010s

In the 2000s and 2010s, Micheal Lynn, with the assistance of others, explored much more about the employee relationship with the customer. In addition to how they continued to nail down why service providers need to have such a relationship, they furthered research on methods to increase (Lynn, 2011) the tips they receive. He also started researching in those years how there are ethnical/racial (Brewster & Lynn, 2015) gaps present as well as gender gaps. Furthermore, in 2013, he proceeded to look at how people from different backgrounds, both race and religion (Lynn & Katz, 2013), tipped differently from one another. In 2008, this study was conducted by Michael Lynn, it was interesting because they were exploring why people of the Black population races would tip less than White people. One of the results of the study was that the servers were providing and worse quality of service, which ultimately led to guests giving less tips. Furthermore, the more studies they conducted at the time, the more they showed the lack of familiarity with the U.S. tipping norms among the Black population. Many servers were acting poorly toward Black people because they would tip less. In 2004 and 2006, Lynn conducted a telephone survey, and the difference was that 35.9% of Black people would tip between 15%-20%, whereas 72.4% of White people would tip between 15%-20%. As well 30.6% of the Black population answered less than 15% of the tip, and 17.3% of White people said under 15% of the tip. With those results in mind, this is why many servers at the time would rather serve white people. However, one of the implications for managers would be to terminate employees employing such behaviors (Lynn, 2008).

Matt Parrett had a different approach and researched if the attractiveness of a server had an impact on customer tipping behaviors, and the surveys concluded that was correct and that it was different between genders. He concluded the paper by stating that attractive servers earned

about 1.37 percentage points more than unattractive servers, which in his study equals to about \$0.40, which over a whole year would add up to \$1261. However, his study also showed that these were split between the two genders. Males would have a tip increase for attractive male servers but not females. Females would have a tip increase for attractive female servers and attractive male servers. Concluding that “beauty pays” (Parrett, 2015).

Innovation During COVID-19

The hospitality industry was growing steadily, and there were many interesting subjects to research. However, in late 2019 and early 2020, the virus COVID-19 changed the industry. On March 13, the President of the United States declared a national emergency that imposed many bans and physical restrictions on how the nation could operate, including restaurants. Many of them got shut down and lost their business due to various restrictions that limited face-to-face interactions. By the spring of 2021, the NRA declared that 90,000 restaurants had either closed temporarily or permanently (Carman, 2022). According to Business Employment Dynamics (BED), in 2020, the total number of restaurant closures was 159,000 (Carman, 2022). However, the average a year is 81,000, meaning that still 78,000 closed their doors. All of this is to say that the hospitality industry had to adapt swiftly and efficiently to be able to survive this trial. One of the solutions to this pandemic was to continue to offer or start offering to-go-ordering. The amount of face-to-face interaction and transactions exponentially decreased as this was the outcome of new regulations (Lynn, 2021). Therefore, many servers' income was on the line because of low traffic. A study was conducted comparing the tipping averages before and during the pandemic. In the second study, data provided by the point-of-sale system called Square shared that the face-to-face tip-per-order decreased at FSR (full-service restaurant). However, the distant tip-per-order increased at QSR (quick-service restaurant) and FSR. Speculations are that

people were more aware of the situation and assisting during those bad times. According to the One Fair Wage, 66% of the survey 1675 restaurants had shared that the tip wages had decreased by 50% or more during the pandemic (Brewster & Gourlay, 2021). Further studies about tipping in full-service restaurant context were conducted whether the wearing of masks affected customer tipping rates and the perceived friendliness of waiters and waitresses. After their surveys were done, Brewster & Gourlay found that there were no significant changes in tipping amounts (only about 15 cents per order), however, they noticed that the results for the servers wearing a mask had a significant negative effect on the participants perceived friendliness of the staff (Brewster & Gourlay, 2021).

A taxi ride tipping measure was created that checked how much people would tip pre-COVID and post-COVID. They measured contradictory responses when low-income individuals who already tipped less stopped tipping altogether, however, those who already tipped a normal amount tipped more than before the pandemic. According to Sarah Conlisk's graphs, there was a decrease in choosing to leave a tip, no matter the income of the individual. Mid-income to high-income people tipped more on average when they did, and low-income initially tipped more but then decreased back to pre-pandemic statistics. The last graph shows how mid-income to high-income areas tipped more generously, and people with low income were more reserved to tip (Conlisk, 2022).

Tipping Post-COVID

One argument is that tipping might have gotten out of control because of COVID-19. In 2024, the Harvard Business School explained how the digitalization of tipping during COVID-19 assisted customers in showing their appreciation; however, the new technologies maintained the suggestive tipping after COVID-19 was over (Lamb, 2024). Many mobile platforms such as

Uber Eats, Door Dash, Domino's, and many other mobile ordering apps have added an option to leave a gratuity, in which they suggest what the customer should tip. These are deliberate choices by the companies to have those options readily available. Gratuities during COVID-19 changed drastically. Online ordering and over-the-phone tips have changed from under 50% to nearly 87% (McCorvey, 2021). Grubhub Inc., a food delivery company, also announced a 15% tipping increase for diners. Therefore, tipping on takeout is now a norm (McCorvey, 2021). COVID has deepened the idea that tipping is now a social norm and not a reward for service since all takeout or delivery is preservice tipping.

Preservice Tipping

Since COVID-19, pre-service tipping has been one of the emerging trends in tipping, which consists of consumers paying the tip upon order placement, specifically before the fulfillment of service (Warren et al., 2021). With the advancements of technology and digital payment, businesses started shifting their payment methods from cash to digital with the facilitation of credit cards, Apple Pay, and others. Many POS systems, such as Square and Toast, have been predominant in smaller businesses such as coffee shops (Lorsch, 2023). Those types of systems use a tablet or display that, upon placing an order, the server or barista will show a screen that will ask you for a tip. These are placed at the counter and accessible to both the employee and the customer since the tablet is switched over to the customer. Coffee shops and other small businesses are known for their "tip jars." However, these are slowly going away as fewer and fewer people carry cash. Customers are now being asked or manipulated into tipping what once was not explicitly tipped for.

Warren et al. (2021) explained how placing these types of tips can feel manipulative to their customers. While post-service tipping reduces guilt and provides more freedom to tip,

preservice tipping feels manipulative to the customer due to the association of the performance with the tip. Suggestive tipping sets a belief that the customer is not generous when deciding not to tip or tip less. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, manipulative means “to influence or control someone or something to your advantage, often without anyone knowing it.” With this method, some businesses have been taking advantage of their customers. In addition to the customers feeling discomfort, they are also being socially pressured as they are being watched by others around them as they tip (Warren et al., 2021a). A study shows that when the customer is alone, they tip on average 10%. However, with people around, they tip 15% (PYMNTS, 2023). This proves that people are influenced by their environment and tend to act more sporadically rather than thoughtfully. This also leads to the fact that customers who tip more when seen by others or are socially pressured care about their image and how others will perceive them. They are manipulated into tipping more due to the situation in which they are placed.

The foundational difference between preservice and post-service tipping is that the sequence of tipping has changed. Wen et al. (2024) proposed that consumers’ tipping can have different mechanisms during preservice and post-service tipping. First, consumers’ tipping motivation varies between preservice and post-service. Consumers pay tips post-service, which are primarily intended to compensate the service provider for their performance in delivering the product or service. Furthermore, the environment has an impact on how customers tip, whether they feel comfortable, whether the business is well maintained, and whether the atmosphere is pleasant, which are also included factors when it comes to post-service tipping. As previous studies have shown, tipping is also a social norm for some individuals rather than a reward for service (Viglia et al., 2019). They do it because it is the right thing to do.

In contrast, consumers pay the tips preservice mainly to compensate for the uncertainties and their expectation to improve the service performance (Viglia et al., 2019). By tipping before the fulfillment, the customer hopes that the service will be better than if they had not tipped at all. This is called compensating for the uncertainties of the service. Which is highly contrary to what consumers have been used to for almost forever. Secondly, after receiving service, consumers may assess the providers more holistically and develop a more thorough perception of the flow of service, which in turn influences their decisions on how much to tip (Berry & Hoffman, 2023; Morewedge & Giblin, 2015). Hence, preservice tipping breaches tipping norms and leads to manipulative intent since this tipping sequence is less acceptable than post-service tipping because of the lack of information on how this service will proceed. One is based on the whole experience, while the other is based on first impressions, which can be the environment, the people, and the atmosphere. Furthermore, this leads to doubts from the consumers' perspective whether they don't tip, they will not be treated equally to those who tip. Even those who tip believe that if they weren't generous enough, they might still receive poor service. This deepens the belief that post-service tipping has just become a social norm, and that preservice tipping has manipulative intents rather than compensation for a job well done.

Theories Used in Tipping Research

Many theories can be applied to preservice tipping. The first is the consumer reactance theory, which has four distinctive steps. First, there must be perceived freedom; second, there must be a threat to that freedom, third, there must be the reactance/response and lastly, the restoration of freedom (Garg, 2021). In this scenario, the perceived freedom is that the consumers have the freedom to tip or not to tip. The threat to that freedom would be the introduction of preservice tipping, which conflicts with the post-service tipping flow. The

consumer has imposed a tip suggestion before the service is performed and is facilitated by the screen being turned towards the customer or requesting a tip. The reaction would be that the consumer decides whether or not they would tip. The final piece, which is the restoration, is that the consumer is either going to accept this change or not, and they will either comply with this innovation or oppose it. This is tied to the elaboration likelihood model that explains if this will be a lasting change or not. However, this will be touched on later in more detail. As mentioned earlier, this applies a lot of pressure and manipulateness towards the customer when they tip due to the lack of service being provided before the tip. This causes unfairness as they cannot determine what the outcome of the product and service will be. Customers lack information, and it is harder to judge for them what would a fair tip be. In the restaurant industry, people are aware that they are paid minimum wage and that they rely on tips. However, uncertainties arise when preservice tipping is introduced in an establishment where tipping would be a common aspect, thus leading it to feel manipulative.

Another theory that is interesting to explore with the tipping displays is the anchoring effect (Pon Staff, 2024). Harvard Law School explains how the anchoring effect is usually used in negotiation or dealmaking, as it relies on the first information given to the individual. For example, the anchoring effect says that by pairing things together, one may prop up the other or vice versa. It could lead to a lower or higher view of the other. This can happen with different tipping percentages or amounts that are suggested on the tipping screens. A customer might perceive 18% as a generous tip because it is placed between 15% and 20%. Thus, this is an area that could lead to guilt when tipping little or none. The Decision Lab claims that this theory is usually applied in marketing or sales, in this scenario, it works well with tipping displays as one

anchors itself and leads to the higher or lower positioning of the tip suggestion that can nudge the customer to tip more.

Another important theory that has been used by other scholars is equity theory (Walster et al., 1973). The equity theory states that people evaluate their input-to-outcome ratio. In other words, this means “whatever I put in I, that’s what I’ll get out of it.” It is crucial to remember that the equity theory is a perception, which means this is only one perspective of things. This means that to measure the equity of the service, they compare what they invest in and see how that outcome matches that input. They assess the fairness of the encounter by doing so. A core principle of this theory also creates inequity distress. Customers feel distressed and uncomfortable when they believe inequity exists in a specific scenario, which equals to them perceiving that they received less for what they paid. All these factors are extremely relevant when it comes to preservice tipping research. In normal tipping sequences, customers can fairly evaluate what the tip should be because they have experienced service, they also have a better view of the situation and more information that assists in the decision-making of the tip. However, in preservice tipping, it is more difficult for customers to assess how the perceived fairness will be met as they have nothing to base the equity on. They might easily feel inequity distress when they tip too much because they are dissatisfied with the product, thus perceiving inequality. However, this theory works both ways. Not only customers can experience distress, but the servers also can. They expect that the tip given to them matches the effort put into the service that they gave and seek equity between them and the customers. Information plays a major role in this theory when it comes to tipping. The more information, the easier it is for customers to assess everything fairly. This ties in with the loyalty aspect of this study because

loyal customers have a better view of the flow of service and are familiar with how things work with that establishment compared to those who are engaging in business for the first time.

Attribution theory (McLeod, 2023) is closely related to equity theory. The attribution theory looks at internal and external attributions. It shows how people react to different events, how people use the information given, and interpret different events, and if the outcomes are due to internal or external factors. In the co-variation model, there are three distinctive aspects of it: consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus. All of these models have a high and low processing. The consistency model looks at the same person in a similar situation. In the context of preservice tipping, it would mean that when there is high consistency, the customer always tips and tips anywhere. When consistency is low, they might tip in only specific cases. Distinctiveness looks like the same person in other situations. When distinctiveness is high, it means that customers tip only in certain places, and when it's low they tip in all situations. Therefore, consistency and distinctiveness are the opposite of each other. However, when looking at consensus it's other people in similar situations. This means when consensus is high, most customers will tip before the service, and when it's low, only a few will.

This theory shows that preservice tipping is a mix of equity theory and attribution theory. The attribution theory helps to process what they think about the preservice tip request, and then the equity theory explains how it makes them feel. In most scenarios, customers tend to feel manipulated into tipping due to the lack of information, which ultimately leads to the inequality of the service.

Theoretical Framework

The main theory employed in this study is the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), in which people process information differently to

different persuasive communication messages. The whole model is a theory about attitude and behavioral change and consistency between attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, all the processing takes place internally. This model helps show how people navigate different messages and how each individual might process them differently. The elaboration likelihood model refers to the amount that one puts into processing a certain message, which ultimately leads to accepting it (creating a lasting change) or rejecting it (temporary change). Thus, it leads to two different forms of processing which are the central route processing and peripheral route processing.

The central route processing states that people draw on high levels of elaboration and deep levels of processing. This means that when processing the message, they notice the importance of the message being passed on and perceive it as significant. People who process the information via the central route of processing have high interest, high motivation, and high importance. Passing through the central route leads to long-lasting attitude changes. In preservice tipping scenarios, people who employ this route are most likely going to consider factors, such as reviews or the expected quality of service and product since they already have experience. All of these factors will influence their decision at the moment of tipping.

The peripheral route processing states the opposite of the central route. People who employ the peripheral route have low levels of elaboration, which leads to shallow processing of the message. They have low motivation, and low interest and don't perceive the message as important one. They focus on peripheral cues, which are information given but not primary, and jump swiftly to conclusions as the context has more importance than the message itself. In contrast to the central route, the peripheral route leads to short-term attitude changes, or temporary ones (Fripp, 2023). In this study, people who employ this route focus more on external factors, which are peripheral cues, such as the environment, attractiveness of the employees,

atmosphere, and aesthetics, which all influence the tipping decision without employing the central route.

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) stated that people hold their perceptions of right and wrong when it comes to their attitude, and when they view theirs with others who are similar, they see it as right. In this study, an important factor of the Elaboration Likelihood Model is time and ability to think. The scenarios where they are asked for a tip when the server turns the screen around usually involve a short and quick decision, taking only a couple of seconds. There is not much time to process the information given in preservice tipping, especially when the customer feels social pressure due to other people around. Furthermore, when the motivation to process that information decreases, people tend to refer more to external factors (environment), which describe the peripheral route. Therefore, preservice tipping can clash with their beliefs, which leads them to act spontaneously or out of behavior due to the lack of time to process.

Suggestive Tipping Formats

Several studies have indicated that there has been an increase in the usage of tip suggestions (Beaudette & Koch, 2023) and that it can influence the tip amount paid through heuristic cues that saves consumers' efforts in determining the tipping amount (Seiter et al., 2011) and makes them more willing to be generous (Karniouchina et al., 2008). Beaudette and Koch, 2023, conducted a study that took place in 11 fast-casual restaurants, 8 café, and 12 casual dining. They state using suggestive tipping formats increases the wages of their employees, however, it still feels manipulative to customers (Warren et al., 2021). Their research also shows that multiple businesses employ such tablet or POS systems. Alexander Boone and Michael Lynn (2021) look at how tipping formats are utilized in laundry or dry-cleaning orders. Some systems have been utilizing suggestive tipping screens through apps or websites to incentivize the work

done by cleaners. Boone and Lynn's goals were to experiment with whether increasing tip suggestions would result in lower satisfaction from customers. Their study had 11 conditions and 13 outcome measures, which is 715 paired combinations. Their outcomes were that larger tipping suggestions led to higher tips received and it had no impact on the overall satisfaction of the customers (Boone & Lynn, 2020).

All digital payments system usually employs close-ended tipping options, which ultimately entice the customer to tip a certain amount (Bluvstein & Raghubir, 2021). The reason why it is employed that way and not a blank screen to ask for a custom tip of some sort is that according to studies and surveys, it is more complicated for people to answer open-ended questions (Krosnick, 1991). In this study they have done seven different studies when it comes to tipping formats, however, for the uprose of this paper, we won't explore all of them, but some of them. The first is about relative terms (percentage) vs absolute (dollar amount) in open-ended formats, then dollar vs percentage sliding scale, and the last one was conducted with actual transactions from a coffee shop, they state that the analyzed secondary data and conducted a field experiment (Bluvstein & Raghubir, 2021). The first study resulted in people would pay more in absolute terms than relative terms, however, that was more specific to small purchases. The second study, employing that sliding bar is a mix of open-ended and close-ended. It revealed that participants left a 50% higher tip when presented in dollar amount than percentages. The last study is more relevant to this study about preservice tipping and was done in a coffee shop where the average check was \$6.63 (SD=5.00). The POS system employs an absolute amount when the order is under \$10 (\$1, \$2, \$3), and a percentage when over \$10 (15%, 20%, 25%), and both have the "No Tip" and "Custom Tip" available. The outcomes are that people tipped more when the orders were under \$10, 7.94%, compared to 7.71% when above \$10. This study is relevant

because it teaches much about how different tipping formats have different effects on how consumers tip. Framing has an important effect on how people tip. Consistently in them, Shirley and Pryia reveal that \$ tips lead to larger tipping amounts. This proved most effective when they were lower bills and that it would increase tips.

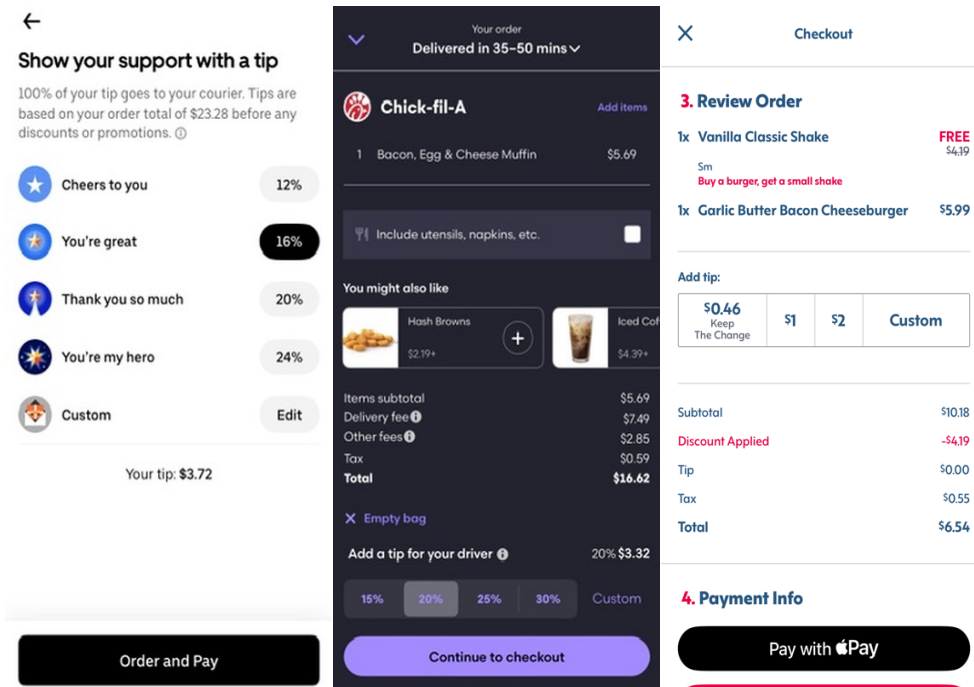
As people grow more and more aware of this trend with this technological and digital shift (Hoover, 2019; Lamb, 2024), clearly there are multiple ways to prompt customers for a tip. According to this study, they explored if tip requests would have a direct impact on the tipping behaviors of their customers. In experimental settings and done through prolific.com, Dyussembayeva et al. (2021) furthermore researched if the presence of the server would have a direct impact on the given tip. The results are in the norm with previous research (Bluvstein & Raghubir, 2021), that when not prompted to tip, customers would leave a higher tip. In addition to that, in this study, the tip request when done without the presence of the server, would also lead to higher tipping amounts (£4.5) than when prompted (about £3.10). The data is flipped, however, still minimal when the server is present and not prompted (about £2.9) and the customer is prompted (about £3.25). This shows that no matter the format, when the server is present during the tipping sequence, it directly increases social pressure. The control owned by the customers is decreased as well when prompted to tip as well (Dyussembayeva et al., 2021). This ties back to the reactance theory and attribution theory. The change in their freedom changes their decision when they are nudged to do it, instead of out of generosity (Azar, 2005; McLeod, 2023).

In today's age, preservice tipping formats are almost on any type of ordering website, mobile app, or small business. When looking at different companies or different apps, here are a couple of them that differentiate themselves.

Figure 1

Tipping interfaces in the Uber Eats, Grubhub, and Sonic Drive-in mobile apps.

(Screenshots by Matthieu Lenglain, April 10, 2025)



As seen here, there are many ways that companies can ask for a tip. There are different strategies employed here that are all similar but different. Uber Eats and Grubhub use a percentage system, as well as show the dollar amount represented. The part that is counterintuitive to most tipping systems, is that they don't show a "No Tip" option. This implies that if the customer decides to leave no tip, they have to select the "Custom" section and put \$0. This is an example of social pressure and feels manipulative (Warren, et al., 2021). In addition to that, Uber Eats adds prompts and colors next to the tipping rates, which tie back to the anchoring effect of how one piece of information can prop up another. Here these prompts also try and tell the customers how their image is built. Imagine the driver saying to you: "Cheers to you" or "You're my hero", there is a major difference between those two statements. This can nudge users of the app to go higher on their tips (Fan et al., 2024) and to build their image of themselves (Azar, 2007).

However, looking at Sonic's preservice tipping options is always to either round up, or give \$1, \$2, or a custom option, even if the orders go beyond \$10, unlike other default systems like Square (Bluvstein & Raghubir, 2021). While Square's main selling point is not about tips, it is relevant to notice that none of the promotions or advertisements on their website for their POS system points out the usability of tipping mechanisms within the system. When searching about the tipping option with Square, it only shows their support page on how to use it. It is interesting because that aspect of the system is not promoted by companies and could be because of the stigma around it or how they know that customers feel manipulated by such screens (Warren, et al., 2021).

Suggestive tipping formats often appear in one of three formats (as shown in Figure 2). For instance, on a \$15 check at a casual dining establishment, the first format (F#1) is that consumers are presented with only customary percentages for a given amount of the check (15%, 18%, and 20%). The second format (F#2) presents not only the customary percentage but also the tip dollar amount based on the tip percentage: 15% (\$2.25), 18% (\$2.70), and 20% (\$3.00). The last format (F#3) presents consumers with customary percentages along with the total amount of the bill after tip: 15% (\$17.25), 18% (\$17.70), and 20% (\$18.00).

Figure 2

Suggestive Tipping Formats



The calculation-assistance formats provide much higher information quality than the percentage (i.e., consumers know exactly how much they need to pay for the tips), which may make them feel more comfortable and less likely to be manipulated. However, preservice tipping creates high levels of uncertainty (Wen et al., 2024), where consumers have not yet been served. Providing more information alone may not be sufficient to decrease perceived manipulation when uncertainty is high (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006).

The Moderating Role of Consumer Loyalty

In addition to the suggestive tipping formats themselves, consumer loyalty plays a pivotal moderating role in shaping how consumers perceive the fairness or manipulateness of preservice tipping. Loyalty, as defined by Khan (2013), is a comprehensive psychological attachment between a consumer and a brand, service, or organization. In the hospitality context, it manifests through repeated patronage, trust, and the customer's familiarity with the service quality and expectations of the establishment.

Preservice tipping, where consumers are prompted to tip before receiving any service, often challenges the traditional norms of hospitality service exchange. Without any service having yet occurred, customers may feel uncertain, scrutinized, or manipulated—especially when faced with pre-set tipping prompts on digital point-of-sale (POS) systems. In this

ambiguous setting, loyalty functions as a buffer that can mitigate the perceived intrusiveness of such systems.

To better understand this relationship, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) offers a helpful framework. ELM proposes that individuals process information through either a central or peripheral route. The route they take depends on their motivation, interest, and perceived importance of the message. When individuals are highly motivated and able to process information deeply, they engage in central route processing, which leads to lasting attitude changes. When individuals are less motivated or distracted, they process messages via the peripheral route, relying on superficial cues and experiencing only short-term attitude changes. For customers with high loyalty, the central route is more likely to be activated when processing suggestive tipping prompts. Loyal patrons are more invested in the brand or business, having built a cognitive and emotional framework based on prior positive experiences. This familiarity reduces ambiguity and allows these customers to better understand the motivations behind the restaurant's tipping prompts. They may interpret such requests not as manipulation, but as a reflection of operational norms or efforts to streamline service. Furthermore, calculation-assistance formats—which provide percentage-based tipping suggestions along with exact dollar amounts—are particularly effective for loyal customers. These formats reduce the cognitive load of mental calculation and improve transparency, thereby reinforcing trust. When the information is presented, loyal consumers feel equipped to make fair and informed decisions, leading to lower perceptions of manipulateness. This is especially true for Format 2 (percentage + tip amount), which was empirically supported as the most effective tipping display for loyal patrons.

Moreover, loyal customers have more contextual knowledge about the establishment, including awareness of service quality, staff professionalism, and overall reliability. This history helps them interpret tipping prompts within a broader framework of fairness, rather than viewing them as exploitative. As such, loyalty increases message relevance and supports deeper, more reflective information processing—thereby activating the central route of persuasion outlined in ELM. This route leads to more enduring behavioral outcomes, such as increased willingness to tip even in non-traditional tipping contexts like preservice situations.

In contrast, customers with low loyalty—such as first-time or infrequent visitors—lack the familiarity and trust necessary to process preservice tipping requests through the central route. For these consumers, the interaction is new, ambiguous, and often perceived as intrusive. Without a well-established brand relationship, the customer is more likely to rely on peripheral cues such as the interface design, employee demeanor, and social pressure (e.g., whether others are watching). This type of processing is superficial and emotionally reactive. As such, non-loyal customers often experience heightened uncertainty and skepticism. Their lack of prior engagement with the brand means they are less likely to attribute good intentions to the tipping prompt. Even well-designed formats may be dismissed as opportunistic or coercive. When tipping prompts are encountered through peripheral processing, customers may perceive all formats—whether percentage-only, dollar-inclusive, or total-bill-inclusive—as equally manipulative. The absence of trust undermines the perceived transparency of the message, and the consumer is unlikely to engage in deeper reasoning about the tip request.

In this context, suggestive tipping appears more like a social pressure mechanism than a helpful service feature. Non-loyal patrons are more reactive to immediate emotional cues—such as feeling watched by staff or other patrons when prompted to tip—than they are to the logical

framing of the tipping interface. This reliance on emotional, situational cues results in short-term behavior changes, such as tipping to avoid discomfort, rather than as an expression of gratitude or service evaluation.

The interaction between loyalty and format type is crucial. When loyalty is high, Format 2 (percentage + tip amount) is perceived as the least manipulative because it offers clarity and helps the customer make an informed decision. Loyal customers are likely to see this as a helpful suggestion, aligning with their prior experiences and expectations from the establishment. This was supported by the study's results, which found a statistically significant interaction between loyalty and Format 2 in lowering perceptions of manipulateness. On the other hand, when loyalty is low, there is no significant difference between the perceived manipulateness of the three tipping formats. This indicates that for non-loyal consumers, the design of the tipping prompt has limited ability to change perceptions. Without the buffer of trust or experience, all formats are met with equal suspicion. Hence, this study proposed:

H1: The suggestive tipping format and consumers' loyalty interactively influence their perceived manipulateness.

H1a: Calculation-assistance formats (percentage + dollar amount) will lead to the lowest levels of perceived manipulateness when loyalty is high.

H1b: There is no significant difference between the three tipping formats in perceived manipulateness when loyalty is low.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Manipulateness

In the domain of consumer decision-making, perceived manipulateness plays a central psychological role in shaping attitudes and subsequent behaviors. In the context of preservice suggestive tipping, manipulateness refers to consumers' interpretation of tipping prompts as

coercive, misleading, or infringing upon their autonomy. This construct acts as a psychological filter through which consumers interpret the intentions behind tipping requests—ultimately influencing their willingness to tip.

According to reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 2013), individuals experience psychological reactance when they perceive their freedom to choose as being threatened. This reactance manifests as a motivational state aimed at restoring that lost freedom. In the context of tipping, when consumers feel pressured or manipulated—especially before receiving any service—they may reject the tip prompt altogether. For example, Haggag and Paci (2014) found that certain changes in the framing of tip suggestions (e.g., higher defaults or lack of a “no tip” option) significantly increased the likelihood of a \$0 tip, by as much as 50%, due to this very phenomenon of reactance. This negative appraisal is not only confined to the tipping decision itself but often spills over into consumers’ overall evaluation of the service provider. As Bodvarsson and Gibson (1999) argued, perceptions of unfair or manipulative practices within service contexts can damage the customer’s view of the business, potentially affecting not only the tipping behavior but also long-term patronage and brand trust. In the case of preservice tipping, if consumers believe that tipping is being demanded prematurely—without corresponding service or value—they may feel exploited. Consequently, perceived manipulateness acts as a powerful mediator between the tipping format, customer loyalty, and the resulting tipping behavior.

What makes preservice tipping particularly susceptible to perceptions of manipulateness is its violation of traditional service exchange norms. Tipping has historically been framed as a post-service act of gratitude—a form of voluntary reward for service quality, empathy, or attentiveness (Azar, 2007). However, preservice tipping repositions the tip as a

prerequisite or expectation, removing the consumer's ability to tie their monetary reward to actual service delivery. This inversion of sequence introduces ambiguity and discomfort, especially when compounded by digital tipping interfaces that lack a “no tip” button or default to high percentages. Research suggests that consumers are highly sensitive to the presentation and framing of tipping options (Bluvstein & Raghurir, 2021). For example, suggestive tipping formats that display only percentages without dollar amounts (e.g., 15%, 18%, 20%) can appear intentionally vague and thus manipulative—especially for unfamiliar or infrequent customers. On the contrary, calculation-assistance formats, which pair percentage suggestions with exact dollar amounts or total bill post-tip, provide consumers with more transparent and helpful information, thereby reducing perceived manipulateness. However, this effect is not uniform across all customers; it is moderated by consumer loyalty.

Perceived manipulateness functions as a psychological barrier between the intent behind the tipping format and the consumer’s behavioral outcome—namely, the decision to tip and the amount tipped. In the absence of manipulateness, tipping prompts may be received as helpful or neutral, especially when they align with consumers’ expectations. However, when consumers perceive the format as intrusive or strategically deceptive, their sense of autonomy is violated, and they may respond by tipping less or not at all. This reaction is particularly potent in non-loyal consumers, who lack contextual familiarity and trust with the establishment. Without prior positive experiences or relationships, these consumers are less likely to give the benefit of the doubt and more likely to interpret preservice tipping prompts as self-serving mechanisms for profit extraction. In contrast, loyal customers, through repeated exposure and consistent service experiences, have established a trust framework with the business, allowing them to interpret even preservice tipping prompts in a more charitable light. This means that the very same tipping

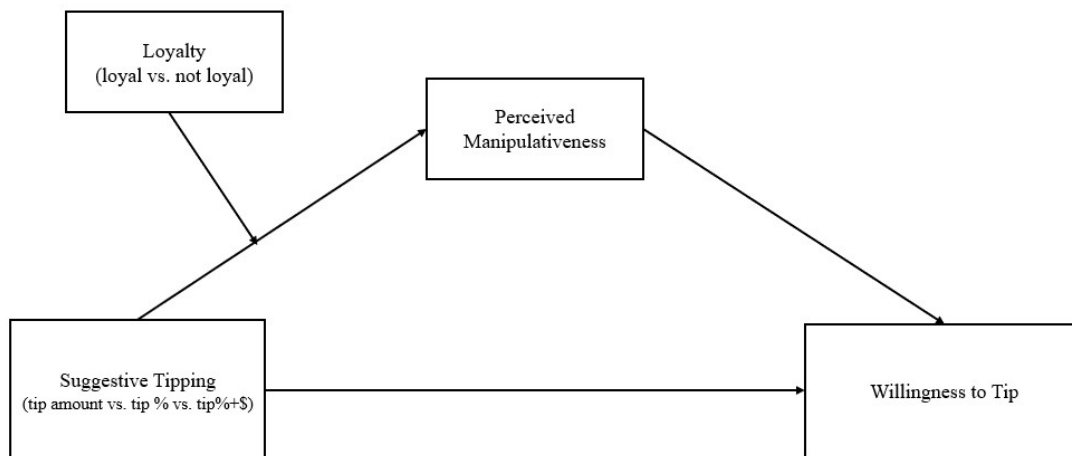
format may be perceived as informative and fair by a loyal customer, but coercive by a new one—highlighting the critical mediating role of perceived manipulativenness.

Hence, the interactive effect of tipping formats and loyalty on willingness to tip will be mediated by perceptions of manipulativenness. Figure 2 presents the study’s conceptual framework.

H2: Consumers’ perceived manipulation mediates the interactive effect of tipping format and loyalty on (a) willingness to tip (tipping percentage). Specifically, calculation-assistance formats will prompt loyal consumers (compared to non-loyal consumers) to perceive less manipulative, leading to high levels of willingness to tip (higher tipping percentage).

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The objective of this study is to examine the moderated effect of customers' loyalty (LOY) on the mediating effect of perceived manipulateness (PM) on the relationship between suggestive tipping (ST) and willingness to tip (WTT). A 3 (suggestive tipping: tip %; F#1) compared to tipping in both %+\$ (F#2) and tip total (F#3 x 2; loyalty: loyal versus not loyal) between-subjects design experiment was executed.

Participants

Data for this study were collected through Prolific.com, an established online participant recruitment platform known for its high-quality data, demographic diversity, and advanced pre-screening capabilities. Prolific was selected due to its ability to efficiently recruit a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults based on predefined eligibility criteria, ensuring relevance and data integrity for this experimental design.

A total of 298 responses were initially collected. After excluding 24 incomplete or invalid responses, 274 usable responses were retained for the final analysis. This sample size was deemed appropriate based on an a priori power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009), which indicated that a minimum of 252 participants would be needed to detect a small to medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.05$) with 80% power and $\alpha = 0.05$ in a moderated mediation design. Therefore, the final sample exceeds the minimum requirement for detecting hypothesized effects with adequate statistical power.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions in a 3 (tipping format: percentage-only, percentage + dollar amount, total bill) $\times$ 2 (loyalty: loyal vs. non-loyal) between-subjects design, resulting in approximately 45–46 participants per condition. The demographic profile of the sample was as follows: 58.3% identified as female, 40.2% as male,

and 1.4% as non-binary or other. In terms of age, the largest proportion of participants fell within the 25–34 age group (37.2%), followed by the 35–44 age group (23.8%). Regarding education, 40.5% had completed a 4-year college degree, while others reported various levels of education ranging from some college to advanced degrees. About 22.5% of participants reported an annual household income exceeding \$100,000. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (65.3%), with the remaining identifying as African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, or other racial backgrounds.

Procedures and Materials

Measures

Participants were recruited through Prolific.com and randomly assigned to one of six conditions in a 3 (suggestive tipping format: percentage-only, percentage + tip dollar amount, total bill after tip) $\times$ 2 (loyalty: loyal vs. non-loyal) between-subjects design. Each participant was presented with a standardized restaurant takeout scenario in which they were prompted to leave a tip prior to receiving service. The scenario included a visual of a digital point-of-sale (POS) system with one of the three tipping formats displayed on the screen. To manipulate loyalty, participants were either told they were a frequent returning customer (loyal condition) or a first-time visitor (non-loyal condition).

Following the scenario, participants responded to several measures. A single-item manipulation check was used to confirm the tipping suggestion prompt: “I believe that the tipping amount is suggested to me in this scenario” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Customer loyalty was also confirmed via a binary item: “I am a patron and loyal to this restaurant” (1 = yes, 2 = no).

To assess perceived manipulateness, three items adapted from Warren et al. (2021) were used ($\alpha = .91$). Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Example items included: “I think the tip suggestion was fair,” “I felt pressured to tip,” and “The tipping prompt seemed manipulative.” Willingness to tip was operationalized by asking participants to select one of three tipping options—15%, 18%, or 20%—mirroring industry-standard defaults commonly used in POS systems (e.g., Square, Toast). While this approach allowed for clear comparisons aligned with real-world presets, it is acknowledged that it may not fully capture tipping intentions below 15% or above 20%. Future studies may consider a sliding scale or open-ended response to assess the full spectrum of tipping behaviors.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

Participants indicated whether the given scenario was realistic ($M = 6.06$; measured on a scale between 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 7 (“strongly agree”). Manipulation checks on suggestive tipping indicated that there were significant mean differences between tipping options and loyalty.

Hypotheses Test

SPSS PROCESS version 4.1 (Model 7) was used to test the hypotheses. A multi-categorical moderated mediation analysis was conducted. The three categories of suggestive tipping formats (F#1, F#2, and F#3) were coded into two dummy codes with the percentage (F#1) as the reference group. Two interaction terms were created accordingly. The interaction of tipping formats (F#2: tip is presented in both percentage and dollar amount) and loyalty on perceived manipulative was negatively significant ($b = -1.09$, $p = .02$), whereas the interaction of tip total (F#3) and loyalty on perceived manipulative was not significant ($b = 0.11$, $p = .83$). Hence, H1 is supported. An index of moderated mediation, estimated by the PROCESS macro, provided statistical evidence of whether the conditional indirect effect is statistically significant. The bootstrapping method with a 95% confidence interval (CI) was used to test the significance of the effects. Table 1 shows the results of the moderated mediation estimates with willingness to tip as a dependent variable. The conditional indirect effect of suggestive tipping formats F#2 (customary percentage + the tip dollar amount) on willingness to tip (WTT) through perceived manipulation is stronger when the consumer is loyal (indirect effect = .41, 95% CI = .15, .67) compared to when the consumer is not loyal (indirect effect = -.01, 95% CI = -.29, .26). The index of moderated mediation for the conditional indirect effect was .42 and statistically

significant (95% CI = .04, .82). However, the index of moderated mediation for F#3 vs. F#1 was not significant (Index = .04, 95% CI = -.33, .44). Hence, H2 is supported.

Table 1

Results of Moderated Mediation

Table 3. Moderated mediation estimates with willingness to tip as DV.

Outcome variables	Predictive variables	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Model R²
Perceived Manipulativeness (PM)						.04
	F#1	.04	.35	.10	.92	
	F#2	-.18	.35	-.51	.61	
	Loyalty	.23	.35	.67	.50	
	Interaction F1	-1.09	.49	-2.22	.02*	
	Interaction F2	-.11	.51	-.22	.83	
Willingness to Tip (WTT)						.38***
	F#1	.05	.12	.38	.70	
	F#2	.08	.13	.66	.51	
	PM	-.39	.03	-12.79	.000***	
Conditional indirect effect through PM						
Not loyal (0)		-.01	.29	.26		
Loyal (1)		.40	.14	.67		
Index of moderated mediation		.42	.04	.82		
Conditional indirect effect through PM						
Not loyal (0)		.07	.20	.33		
Loyal (1)		.11	.16	.38		
Index of moderated mediation		.04	.33	.42		

Note: Each condition is coded as follows: 0 = F#1, 1 = F#2, 2 = F#3; 0 = not loyal, 1 = loyal. n = 274 (5000 bootstrap samples for bootstrap confidence interval).

PM = perceived manipulateness

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The results suggest that when consumers' loyalty is low, all three formats of suggestive tipping are perceived as manipulative for consumers, leading to lower willingness to tip.

However, when consumer loyalty is high, the tipping suggestion format with both percentage and tip dollar amount was perceived as less manipulative, which results in a higher willingness to pay. The results suggest that loyal consumers would still prefer the calculation assistance format with percentage and dollar amount in the preservice context. We argue that when the information displayed is written and clearly expressed, consumers feel less manipulated and are likelier to tip more.

Practical Implications

First, preservice tipping is perceived as inherently risky, even among loyal consumers. Restaurant managers may apply these insights by strategically designing tipping suggestions that display both percentage and tip dollar amounts, which could enhance consumer motivation to tip more generously. Furthermore, personalization assists in creating a unique experience. It can be done by saying or displaying the customer's name on the screen.

Second, the study highlights the importance of consumer loyalty, as loyal consumers tend to feel less manipulated when presented with suggestive tipping amounts. Restaurant practitioners should prioritize strengthening their loyalty programs, aiming to encourage repeat patronage where consumers are more receptive to preservice tipping suggestions. One simple way could be a point system: For every dollar spent, they receive that amount back in points, which they can then utilize on a future order to get a discount or maybe redeem a product.

Lastly, restaurant owners should aim to tailor their tipping strategies to loyal and non-loyal customers or first-timers. Owners need to recognize that these two groups are different

from one another and that they should aim to diversify. For loyal customers, it's important to incentivize tipping as staff gets familiar with the customer and the service is more and more known. However, this will not work without the loyalty program and consistent service quality. For new customers, it might be trickier than expected. It could be a discount for the next time they come in, or if they bring a guest with them, they could get a free drink. The owner needs to find ways to make it appealing to have repeat customers. All of these strategies are there to assist in mitigating the perception of manipulateness.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical advancement of tipping behavior research by extending the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) to the emerging context of preservice tipping, which has grown increasingly prevalent with the rise of digital payment platforms. Traditionally, tipping has been conceptualized as a post-service evaluative behavior—a voluntary gesture of gratitude contingent on the service quality received (Azar, 2007). However, this study challenges that conventional framework by exploring how consumers cognitively process tipping requests prior to service, and how their perceptions of manipulateness vary depending on both tipping format and customer loyalty.

First, the findings demonstrate that loyal customers are more likely to engage in central route processing when exposed to tipping suggestions. According to the ELM, individuals with high involvement and motivation—such as loyal patrons who have built a psychological bond with the restaurant—tend to process persuasive messages more thoughtfully and systematically. In this study, calculation-assistance formats (e.g., percentage + dollar amount) provided more concrete and transparent information, which led to reduced perceptions of manipulateness among loyal customers. This supports the idea that when information is clear, specific, and

relevant, it encourages deep cognitive elaboration, resulting in more enduring attitude changes—such as increased willingness to tip in preservice contexts.

This finding aligns with earlier ELM-based studies in hospitality and marketing that suggest consumer trust and familiarity facilitate message elaboration and reduce resistance (Chang et al., 2013). Moreover, it extends these findings by demonstrating that loyalty not only facilitates favorable responses to promotional messages but also buffers against psychological reactance in ethically sensitive situations like preservice tipping. As such, the study reveals a dual function of loyalty: it enhances message credibility and lowers threat perception, thereby influencing behavioral intentions in complex decision-making scenarios.

Second, this research deepens our understanding of perceived manipulateness in preservice tipping. While prior studies have shown that consumers often view tipping prompts—especially digital or automatic ones—as manipulative (Warren et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2024), this study demonstrates that such perceptions are not universal, but instead vary by contextual cues and individual differences. Specifically, the interaction between suggestive tipping format and consumer loyalty was found to significantly impact perceived manipulateness, which in turn influenced willingness to tip. This supports the broader theoretical perspective that consumers do not passively respond to prompts, but rather interpret them through personalized cognitive and affective lenses (Bodvarsson & Gibson, 1999). The study further shows that preservice tipping is uniquely vulnerable to perceptions of manipulation because it occurs prior to the fulfillment of service, violating the expected sequence of reciprocity that underpins traditional tipping norms (Azar, 2007). In doing so, the findings challenge the foundational belief that tipping is purely an ex-post act of appreciation. Instead, they suggest that tipping behavior—particularly in digitally

mediated and front-loaded experiences—is increasingly shaped by anticipatory perceptions of value, fairness, and autonomy.

The study's findings also highlight the importance of format design and message framing. Calculation-assistance formats were less likely to be perceived as manipulative because they provided consumers with clearer cost-benefit estimations. This aligns with Karniouchina et al. (2008) and Bluvstein and Raghurir (2021), who argued that providing exact dollar amounts can increase perceived transparency and reduce cognitive effort, ultimately leading to greater compliance with default options. However, this study builds upon that work by identifying for whom (i.e., loyal customers) such formats are most effective, and why (through decreased manipulateness and deeper processing).

Lastly, the study advances the literature on customer loyalty as a psychological moderator. Loyalty has traditionally been studied in terms of repeat patronage, brand trust, and emotional attachment (Khan, 2013; Bowen & Shoemaker, 2003). This study contributes to this body of work by showing that loyalty not only fosters a favorable effect but also modulates how consumers cognitively interpret ambiguous or potentially coercive business practices. Specifically, loyal customers—through their accumulated experiences and trust in the brand—are better equipped to interpret tipping prompts as normative and fair, rather than manipulative. By contrast, non-loyal customers, lacking that cognitive and emotional foundation, are more likely to rely on peripheral cues, such as social pressure or interface aesthetics when evaluating preservice tipping requests. Their shallow processing leads to uniformly high perceptions of manipulateness across all tipping formats, suggesting that trust-building is essential to mitigate negative responses in these scenarios. This insight aligns with Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006), who emphasized the role of trust and information quality in shaping perceived credibility in

high-uncertainty contexts. Together, these insights contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the psychological processes underlying tipping behavior in digital environments and open new avenues for both research and practice in hospitality, behavioral economics, and consumer psychology.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in an experimental setting, which may not fully capture real-world tipping behaviors. Future research should employ field experiments in real-life restaurants that use preservice tipping settings to enhance external validity. Compared to an experimental setting, a real-world setting would also grasp people's various external factors, such as time constraints, mood, or social pressures. These are some of the factors that could influence how they are tipped.

The study's sample was predominantly Caucasian (65.3%), with most participants aged 25–44 (61%) and having completed a 4-year college degree (40.5%). This demographic concentration may limit the generalizability of the findings to more diverse populations. Future research should aim to include a more heterogeneous sample across racial, age, and educational backgrounds to ensure the results apply to a broader range of consumers. This is essential due to different cultures having different values. Even asking if the respondent has worked in a position where preservice tipping was employed can assist them in understanding their position, which could lead to more empathy towards the server.

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IRB Approval Letter



TO: Yue Teng Vaughan
Hospitality Management

Proposal Number: IRB-12288

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 08/01/2024

RE: Proposal Entitled, "An investigation of consumers' perception and decision-making during pre-service tipping.."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 08/01/2024 12:43 PM ET

Written Consent

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in an online survey as part of a research study titled "An investigation of consumers' perception and decision-making during pre-service tipping." This study aims to learn how consumers feel about pre-service tipping during different scenarios including whether they are being crowded and the variants of tipping screens. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the researcher or any affiliated institutions.

Below are some important points regarding your participation in this study:

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to understand your perceptions toward preservice tipping in the hospitality industry.

Procedure: The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. It will involve a scenario and questions related to it.

Confidentiality: Your identity and any information you provide in the survey will be kept strictly confidential. Only the researcher and authorized personnel will have access to the data collected, and your identity will be anonymized in any reports or publications resulting from this study.

Benefits: While there may not be direct benefits to you for participating in this study, your insights and experiences will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field.

Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this interview. You may feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics, but you are free to skip any questions or topics that you do not wish to discuss.

Future Use of Data: Any identifiable private information collected during this study will undergo a process of de-identification, which involves removing or coding identifying information such as names, addresses, contact details, or other personal identifiers associated with the data. Once de-identification is complete, the de-identified information may be used for future research studies. These studies may be conducted by the original researchers or by other investigators who have obtained approval from their respective institutional review boards or ethics committees and without additional informed consent.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study or your participation, please feel free to contact the researcher at mattleng@ksu.edu, and/or yvvaughan@ksu.edu. The University Research Compliance Office (#IRB-12288) at Kansas State University has approved the research protocol and if you have any questions about the rights of individuals in this study, please contact Dr. Lisa Rubin, Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, (785) 532-3224, 313 Bluemont Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided above, and you freely consent to participate in the interview.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.
Sincerely,

Matthieu Lenglain
Hospitality Administration
College of Health and Human Sciences
Kansas State University

Dr. Yue Teng Vaughan
Department of Hospitality Management
College of Health and Human Sciences
Kansas State University

Debriefing Statement

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in the online survey as part of our research study. As the research concludes, we want to provide you with a debriefing statement to ensure that you understand the purposes, consequences, and benefits of your participation.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of our research study, titled "An investigation of consumers' perception and decision-making during pre-service tipping." We are conducting scenario-based experimental designs to investigate whether the consumer is being crowded or not and with different tipping screens, consumers are more likely to tip more or less. We will study consumers' feelings and behaviors based on hypothetical scenarios. Your insights and experiences shared during the survey are invaluable in helping us achieve a deeper understanding of this subject in the hospitality industry.

Consequences of Participation: Your participation in this survey involved sharing your thoughts, opinions, and experiences on the topics discussed. We understand that discussing certain topics may have been sensitive or personal, and we appreciate your openness and honesty. It's important to note that there were no foreseeable negative consequences associated with your participation in this research. However, if you experienced any discomfort or distress during the survey, please know that you can reach out to us for support or further assistance.

Benefits of the Research: While there may not be direct benefits to you as a participant, your contribution to this research study is incredibly valuable. Your insights and perspectives will help advance knowledge in the field and may inform future research, policies, or interventions related to tipping in hospitality education. Additionally, participating in research allows you to engage with important issues, reflect on your own experiences, and contribute to the broader academic and professions.

Confidentiality and Data Handling: We want to reassure you that all information shared during the interview has been treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your identity and any identifiable information provided have been anonymized to ensure your privacy. Any data collected during the interview will be securely stored and only accessed by authorized personnel involved in the research study.

Further Information: If you have any further questions, concerns, or would like additional information about the research study, please do not hesitate to contact us at mattleng@ksu.edu, and/or ytvaughan@ksu.edu. The University Research Compliance Office (#IRB-12288) at Kansas State University has approved the research protocol and if you have any questions about the rights of individuals in this study, please contact Dr. Lisa Rubin, Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, (785) 532-3224, 313 Bluemont Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

We are more than happy to address any queries you may have.

Once again, we extend our sincere gratitude for your participation in this research study. Your willingness to share your insights and experiences has been invaluable, and we truly appreciate your contribution to advancing knowledge in this field.

Sincerely,

Matthieu Lenglain
Hospitality Administration
College of Health and Human Sciences
Kansas State University

Dr. Yue Teng Vaughan
Department of Hospitality Management
College of Health and Human Sciences
Kansas State University

Scenarios

Scenario for loyal customers:

You enter a casual-dining restaurant and ordered your food at the register. You are a patron and have been regularly visit this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen that you see your bill and tip amount.

Scenario for not loyal customers:

You enter a casual-dining restaurant and ordered your food at the register. This is your first time to visit this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen that you see your bill and tip amount.

Survey

Pre-service tipping

Start of Block: Consent

Q13 Dear Participant, You are invited to participate in a survey that aims to understand pre-service tipping behavior in casual dining restaurants. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the researcher or any affiliated institutions. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes. We will not be collecting your identity information. In the case you provide the information by accident, only the researcher and authorized personnel will have access to the data collected, and your identity will be anonymized in any reports or publications resulting from this study. While there may not be direct benefits to you for participating in this study, your insights and experiences will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this survey. You may feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics, but you are free to skip any questions or topics that you do not wish to discuss. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns about the study or your participation, please feel free to contact the researcher at ytvaughan@ksu.edu. The University Research Compliance Office at Kansas State University has approved the research protocol, and if you have any questions about the rights of individuals in this study, please contact Dr. Lisa Rubin, Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, (785)

532-3224, 313 Bluemont Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506. Thank you for your participation in this research study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

- ☐ I agree to participated in this study. (1)
- ☐ I **DISAGREE** to participate in this study. (2)

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Prolific

Q12 Please write your Prolific ID here:

End of Block: Prolific

Start of Block: Tip total x not loyal

Q19 You enter a casual dining restaurant and order your food at the register. This is your first time to visit this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier, and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen where you see your bill and tip amount.

End of Block: Tip total x not loyal

Start of Block: Tip amount x loyal

Q18 You enter a casual dining restaurant and order your food at the register. You are a patron and have been regularly visiting this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier, and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen where you see your bill and tip amount.

End of Block: Tip amount x loyal

Start of Block: Tip % x loyal

Q14 You enter a casual dining restaurant and order your food at the register. You are a patron and have been regularly visiting this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier, and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen where you see your bill and tip amount.

End of Block: Tip % x loyal

Start of Block: Tip% x not loyal

Q15 You enter a casual dining restaurant and order your food at the register. This is your first time to visit this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier, and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen where you see your bill and tip amount.

End of Block: Tip % x not loyal

Start of Block: Tip %\$ x loyal

Q16 You enter a casual dining restaurant and order your food at the register. You are a patron and have been regularly visiting this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier, and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen where you see your bill and tip amount.

End of Block: Tip %\$ x loyal

Start of Block: Tip %\$ x not loyal

Q17 You enter a casual dining restaurant and order your food at the register. This is your first time to visit this restaurant. You placed your order with the cashier, and the cashier shows you the tablet screen. Below is the screen where you see your bill and tip amount.

End of Block: Tip %\$ x not loyal

Start of Block: Realism Check

Q6 How realistic was this scenario?

☐ Very unrealistic (1)

- ☐ Unrealistic (2)
- ☐ Somewhat unrealistic (3)
- ☐ Neutral (4)
- ☐ Somewhat realistic (5)
- ☐ Realistic (6)
- ☐ Very realistic (7)

End of Block: Realism Check

Start of Block: MC/AC

Q7 I believe that the tipping amount is suggested to me in this scenario.

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q8 Please select somewhat disagree for this question.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I think this tip suggestion was fair. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like the suggestive tipping. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: MC/AC

Start of Block: Dependent Variables

Q9 Considering the scenario, how much will you likely to tip?

- ☐ 15% (1)
- ☐ 18% (2)
- ☐ 20% (3)
- ☐ Custom amount (4)
- ☐ No tip (5)

Q10 Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
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The way that
the tip
suggested to
me seems
acceptable.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

(1)

The way that
the tip
suggested to
me seems
manipulative
that I do not
like. (2)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I think this

tip

suggestion

was fair. (3)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Q11 Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
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I like the

suggestive

tipping.

(1)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

I would

like to see

tipping

being get

rid of all

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

together.

(2)

End of Block: Dependent Variables

Start of Block: Demographic

Q1 What is your gender?

☐ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

☐ Other (3)

☐ Prefer not to say (4)

Q2 How old are you?

☐ Under 18 years old (1)

☐ 18-24 years old (2)

- ☐ 25-34 years old (3)
- ☐ 35-44 years old (4)
- ☐ 45-54 years old (5)
- ☐ 55-64 years old (6)
- ☐ 65 years old and above (7)

Q3 What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ White/Caucasian (1)
- ☐ Black/African American (2)
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino (3)
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (4)
- ☐ Native American/American Indian (5)
- ☐ Other (6)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (7)

Q4 What is your approximate household income?

- ☐ Under \$20,000 (1)
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$35,000 (2)
- ☐ \$35,001 - \$50,000 (3)
- ☐ \$50,001 - \$75,000 (4)
- ☐ \$75,001 - \$100,000 (5)
- ☐ Over \$100,000 (6)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (7)

Q5 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than high school (1)
- ☐ High school graduate (2)
- ☐ Some college (3)

☐ 2 year degree (4)

☐ 4 year degree (5)

☐ Professional degree (6)

☐ Doctorate (7)

End of Block: Demographic