

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI
DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EDUCATION

**EVALUATING HOW COVID 19 AFFECTED THE MEAL EXPERIENCE OF
RESTAURANT CUSTOMERS IN AKAYET HOTEL RESTAURANT AT
BOLGATANGA IN THE UPPER EAST REGION.**



SECHIRA EMELIA WEMATU

MARCH, 2022

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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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**A DISSERTATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CATERING AND
HOSPITALITY SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
ATTAINMENT OF A MASTERS OF TECHNOLOGY DEGREE IN
CATERING AND HOSPITALITY IN TOURISM IN THE UNIVERSITY.**

MARCH, 2022

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **SECHIRA EMELIA WEMATU**, hereby declare that, besides the quotations and references cited in this thesis, the findings are the outcome of my independent research and that no part of it has been presented for the award of a degree in the University or elsewhere to the best of my knowledge. I therefore accept responsibility for anything in this dissertation.

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DATE:



SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the university.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: DR. MRS ELLEN OLU

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DATE:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My utmost appreciation goes to the almighty God for keeping us healthy, safe and in sound mind throughout this period of the reach, may his name be glorified always.

To my HOD and the rest of his able staff I say kudos to you all especially my supervisor Dr. Mrs. Ellen Olu for her advice, co-operation and in fact the briefings you took me through. God bless you abundantly.

Thanks to all my able lecturers of the department of Technology Education – University of Education, Kumasi campus.

Lastly, my warmest appreciation to my brother in Christ, brother Joseph AY for his support, prayers and encouragement given to me during this attachment period. May the almighty God bless and protect us all.



DECLARATION

I dedicate this reach work to lovely Daughter Mustaksira Iddrisu and her two brothers Mistaw Iddrisu and Miszal Iddrisu and my Late Mother Victoria Ayiah Nyabase entire Schira"s Family.



ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the meal experience of restaurant customer in Akayet Hotel restaurant at Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region. Descriptive research design was used. Moreover, quantitative research approach was adopted. The research was undertaken in Akayet Hotel Restaurant in Bolgatanga. The target population were 110 respondents. Random sampling method was used to obtain the sample size of 86 participants. The main tool for collection of data was questionnaire. The statistical package for social scientists (SPSS version 22) was used to process all the quantitative responses from the questionnaire. The study results show that majority 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that for hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma and the lockdown policy forced restaurants to close. Customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public and also, 43(51.2%) of the respondents agreed that because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. The determinants of meal experience of customers were ranked as spicy food menu (mean score of 4.00, ranked 1st), hygiene and cleanliness (mean score of 3.90, ranked 2nd), cleanliness of restrooms and atmosphere (mean score of 3.89, ranked 3rd), and value for money (mean score of 3.86, ranked 4th), employee friendliness (mean score of 3.86, ranked 5th), and efficient service (mean score of 3.84, ranked 6th). The study concluded that, food handlers' hands were properly washed with soap under running water, and personal hygiene and personal hygiene practices were properly adhered to as nose and face masks were frequently used, and this improved the quality of the food. The study recommended that the Government of Ghana through the Bolgatanga Metropolitan Assembly should periodically inspect the premises of the restaurants operators to ensure that the eating places are neat and free from any unhygienic materials that can cause epidemic like COVID-19, cholera etc.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In December 2019, Wuhan City, in the Chinese province of Hubei, became the epicenter of a novel contagious coronavirus illness (COVID-19) outbreak with an unclear cause (Bogoch, Watts, Thomas-Bachli, Huber, Kraemer, & Khan, 2020). COVID-19 is still being studied in order to learn more about its transmissibility, severity, and other characteristics (Bogoch, et al., 2020). It indicates that the virus was initially transmitted to humans at a seafood market by an infected animal. Human-to-human transmission of the COVID-19 virus was soon discovered as a secondary route of infection (Bogoch, et al., 2020).

It was discovered that COVID-19 infection occurs among intimate contacts and that exposure to the virus causes the virus to spread (Bogoch, et al., 2020). People over 60 years old and people with poor immune function, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, cancer, renal, and hepatic dysfunction, are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection than children, who may be less likely to become infected or, if they do, may show milder symptoms or even asymptomatic infection, according to recent studies (Bogoch, et al., 2020).

The food experience refers to a variety of measurable and intangible activities which are witnessed by visitors during their eating (Kotschevar & Withrow, 2018). Meal encounters occur any time anyone eats away from home like the restaurant where products and services are paid for (Warde & Martens 2010). The meals of a consumer come from a series of encounters with a substance that causes reactions (Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger 2019). The interactions with a client involving the purchase, use and unplanned meetings with the waiter / waitress or

other individuals inside an establishment involve the direct and indirect communication (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Consumer evaluation differs greatly from one food to another, from one menu to another, from one food price to another, to one service, to one's environment, place and the pace at which the restaurants are involved (Noone et al., 2009). Previous theories adapted to the five listed factors from Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece (2009). Food tastes, temperatures, food type, consistency, quantity, textures, aromas, and color are part of the exploration of sensual aspects of food (Geissler & Rucks, 2011). The opinion also shared by Kleynhans (2013) and Davis etc. (2012) is that food improves the overall food experience.

Meal encounters are essential to restaurant customer loyalty and profitability. Food eaten outside the home has become popular these days, partially because more and more women seek jobs outside their homes, making eating a necessity for many people (Andaleeb & Caskey 2017).

Meal interaction starts when customers sit at their table and ends when a restaurant vacates their table (Noone Kimes Mattila & Wirtz 2017). Several authors describe meal experience as the combination of several factors such as food, menu choice, service, environment, group size, other customers, children's facilities, recommendation, new experience, provision of unique twist and price value to achieve customer satisfaction (Andersson & Mossberg 2014).

The fact that the number of restaurants operating in Ghana has increased is a positive omen for both restaurants and government, but meal experience which is one of the critical determinants of successful restaurant activity has not attracted much attention from restaurants and researchers.

A limited number of research have been carried out on meal quality and customer satisfaction (Auty 2012). Nevertheless, these research did not rely on meal interaction determinants. Furthermore, research on the food services sector in Ghana centered on efficiency of the food service (Mensah 2009) and food health (Akyeampong 2017).

In Ghana, though there was lack of statistics on patronage of food service, there is anecdotal evidence that restaurants in especially Accra, Kumasi, Bolgatanga and Takoradi have seen increase patronage.

The increase in the number of restaurant operating in Ghana is a credit to both restaurant and government, but meal experience is one of the critical determinants of successful operation of restaurants during this hard times or covid – 19 which should have attracted much attention from restaurant and researcher.

The Covid –19 pandemic has fundamentally change the way that we all interact with each other. unsurprisingly industries and gathering have been the hard hit during lockdown. Even as restaurant begin to reopen, consumers are anxious and have new expectation for dining experiences. From the overnight rise of delivery and pick – up and the need for contactless ordering and payment options, to new way to eliminate crowed waiting areas operators and exploring was to adopt to meet the expectations of a changed customer in order to thrive in a post – pandemic world.

Researchers have been studying the impact COVID - 19 on consumers dining behavior shortly after the outbreak and have proposed preliminary findings. For example, in the cyber space, Mayasari et al (2018) reported that people were submitting fewer Google queries about restaurant” but searching more about delivery and take away”. In the real world young et al discovered that daily new covid - 19 cases and stay – at – home orders had negative impact on restaurant consumption, especially for full – service establishment. This study would therefore, evaluate how

covid 19 has affected the meal experience of restaurant customers in Akayet Hotel Restaurant at Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Food consume outside the home was common before the pandemic covid-19 due to the fact that more women are pursuing careers outside their home, thereby making eating out a necessity for many people (Andaleed and Caskey, 2007). The restaurant operators should always be extremely critical as it is a deciding factor in restaurant choice. In addition, restaurants located far from clients may be reduced in the sponsorship of work or residence. It would definitely surpass the projected expenditure's expected revenue. When this continues for a certain time, it is a struggle to control the institutions. These restaurants start operating at a loss and if not changed in time, some restaurants may collapse. However, there were no issues with patronage in restaurants in places of interest.

The Ghana government has imposed a number of measures to reduce the spread of the COVID 19 disease, including but not limited to the banishment of any social gathering; the shutdown of schools, colleges and colleges and the partial lockdown of restrictions on the movements of the people. Although essential, this will have a negative effect on major sectors of the economy, especially hospitality. Today, the Ghanaian people have been frightened by the lockout, and this may maybe contribute to the dramatic rise in food prices and rises in food hosting in recent weeks.

All actions that necessitate face-to-face meetings have also been postponed until the lockdown is over. Should this pandemic continue beyond what has been anticipated, Ghanaians and smallholder farmers who constitute the majority of the agricultural sector and who also have little or no access to inputs or logistics to maneuver

smoothly, especially during this pandemic, will be affected. All establishments, such as supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels are to observe enhanced hygiene procedures by providing running water and soap for washing of hands and hand sanitizers.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the meal experience of restaurant customer in Akayet Hotel restaurant at Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1. Evaluate the effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Akayet Hotel Restaurant customers.
2. Assess the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant
3. Examining how delivery service can be made a safe way on meal experience during and after COVID – 19.



1.5 Research question

1. What are the effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Akayet Hotel Restaurant customers?
2. What are the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant?
3. How can service providers deliver quality and safe service to enhance customer's meal experience during and after COVID – 19 Pandemic?

1.6 Delimitation

The study will be limited to the people of Bolgatanga and customers of Akayet hotel restaurant. This is due to observation made during our eight weeks’ attachment in Akayet Hotel, Bolgatanga.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Meal experience of restaurant customer varies greatly relating to food, variety of menu, price of food, services, atmosphere, location and the pace at which activities take place in the restaurant (Noone et al 2009; Reynolds & Hwang, 2006; Shahin & Semea, 2010). Despite the identification of these factors, the customer meal experience goes beyond just the mere factors but with COVID 19 – free protocols. This study therefore seeks to evaluate the effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of restaurant customers.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is organized in five Chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which covers the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, as well as the scope, limitations of the study and the organization of the study. This is followed by Chapter Two which reviews extensive related theoretical and empirical literature on the subject matter. Chapter Three looks at the methodology of the research which comprises the research design, the research population, sample and sampling technique. It also considers the sources of data and data collection instruments, methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter four presents the data collected, findings and discussions. Finally, Chapter Five presents summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Hotel Restaurant customers.

For hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma. In early 2020, for example, the lockdown policy forced restaurants to close. Furthermore, customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public. Because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. Restaurants have a bleak future.

Over half of eateries are expected to close, according to experts (Severson & Yaffe-Bellany, 2020). As a result, maintaining consumer demand throughout the crisis is vital (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2016). (Sigala, 2020). Many people overreacted to COVID-19 by storing supplies or going to great lengths to avoid contact with others. Consumers are also hesitant to go to restaurants and pubs in the context of services. As a result, it is critical to analyze the many aspects that may help consumers regain their desire to frequent restaurants under these conditions. Consumers' perceptions and evaluations of resale properties are influenced by the availability of private rooms in restaurants (Hwang & Yoon, 2019; Tse, So, & Sin, 2016; Yim, Lee, & Kim, 2014). In this section, we investigate the effect of perceived threat and the salience of COVID-19 on the preference for restaurants with private dining facilities and for private dining tables, using the behavioral inhibition system theory (Elliot, 2016), the contagion effect (Argo, Dahl, & Morales, 2016), and the crisis management theory (Barton, 2014).

Finally, this study proposes a plan for recovering from the severe effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on the hospitality industry (Sigala, 2020). People are generally motivated to engage in social and physical engagement (Hill, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, compelled the entire world to adjust to a new normal. A pandemic has a history of instilling dread in others because to the threat of infections (Murray & Schaller, 2010). People also have subjective assessments of the illness threat (rather than objective opinions on actual events) (Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 2010).

As a result, it's critical to understand how the perceived threat of COVID-19 influences numerous behaviors, including restaurant preference. Consumers who believe the COVID-19 threat is high are likely to favor private dining restaurants or private tables in a restaurant, according to our predictions. This forecast is based on a number of hypotheses. First, according to the behavioral inhibition system theory (Elliot, 2016), pandemic anxiety might lead to avoidance behaviors including increasing physical distance from others in social interactions. People avoid other people who may carry COVID-19 as a result of their need for safety (Crandall & Moriarty, 2015).

Furthermore, the contagion effect (Argo et al., 2006; Kim, 2017) is concerned with humans' inflated judgments about the transmission of object essences. This effect revealed people's aversion to both direct and indirect physical contact (Argo et al., 2016). (Kim, 2017). Finally, research on crisis management reveals that customers are more interested in travel alternatives that are seen to be prepared (for example, those that are certified as clean and safe according to protocols such as the CovidClean program; (Barton, 2014; Pizam & Fleischer, 2012; Tse et al., 2016). This preference

for preparedness-related options shows that people have a higher need for solutions that are less risky (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2019).

2.1.1 Concept of Food Preference

Food preference defined by Randall and Sanjur (2011:151) is the degree of like or dislike for a food. Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] (2017) also defines food preferences as attitudes toward a given type of food, as compared with other foods, on the basis of favourable physiological reaction, sociological norms, or pleasant sensation. Rosalin and Soetanto (2016) see food preference as the selection of food items from the choices available among acceptable foods. Likewise, Rozin (2016), on the other hand, saw food preference as a comparison between two or more foods which leads to a choice.

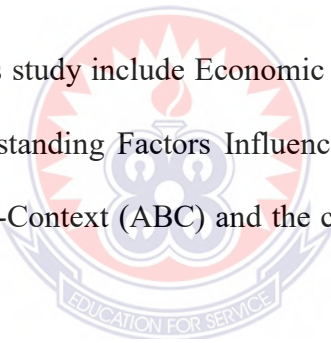
These food preferences according to Birch (2010a), Cardello and Maller (2012); Randall and Sanjur (2011); Shepherd, Stockley, Schyns and Taylor (2018) and Wein, Sabry and Evers (2019) can exist within individuals and can be assessed by rating the liking or pleasantness of food items. Another common usage in food science is linking preference to liking/tasting. Food preference, in general, refers to the selection of one food item over the other (Chang, Kivela, & Mark, 2010).

Abdullah, Abdurahman, and Hamali (2013) are of the notion that food preferences can be regarded as an individual's attitude towards a set of objects, typically reflected in an explicit decision-making process. Studies have suggested that differences in attitudes, preferences or benefits from services ultimately motivate customers to make choices (Honkanen, 2010; Olsen, Prebensen, & Larsen, 2009; Honkanen, Olsen, & Myrland, 2014).

From the various definitions and descriptions, food preference is said to be making choices among alternatives or liking something at the expense of the other. Moreover, per the various definitions, food preference may come about through the taste, presentation, texture, flavour, health, nutrition and environmental influences which an individual has during the first or subsequent contact with food. If these choices are not converted into preference, then they remain just accepting what is available. Conversely, all the definitions by the various researchers tend to be saying related things, which make the definition of food preference very much the same with the only difference being what is responsible for this preference.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The theories reviewed for this study include Economic Model of Food Consumption, Conceptual Model for Understanding Factors Influencing Food Choice, Conceptual Model for Attitude-behaviour-Context (ABC) and the conceptual framework adapted is Model of Food Preferences.

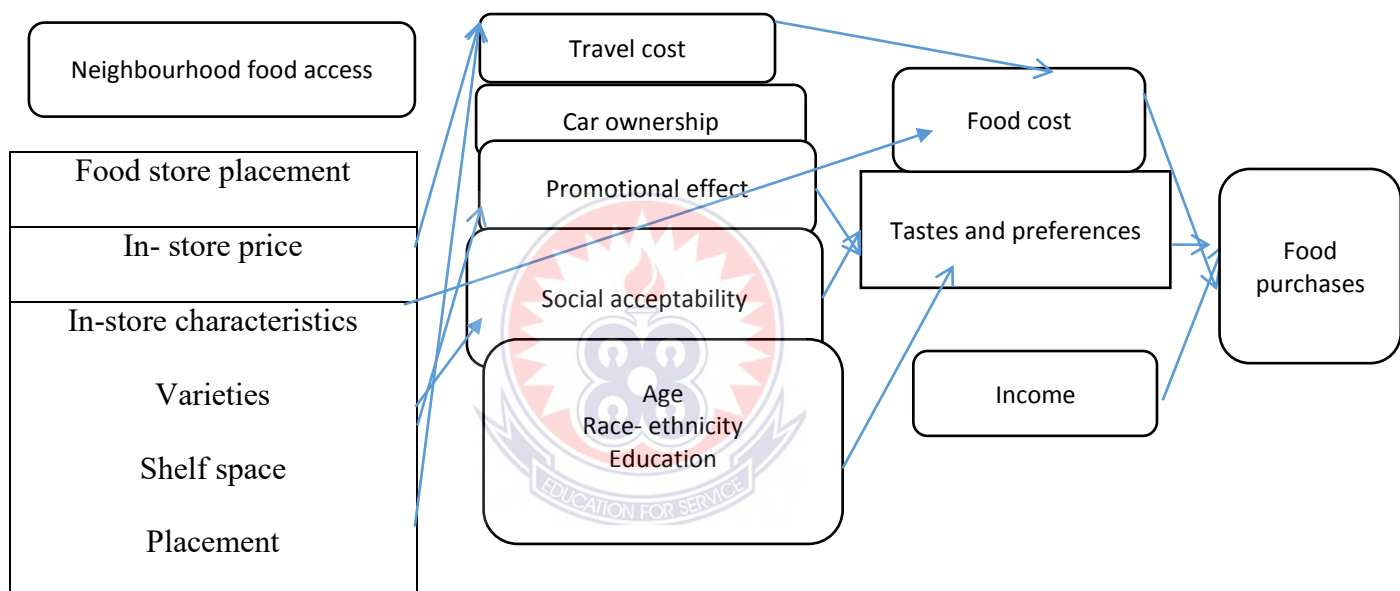


2.2.1 Economic Model of Food Consumption

The model was proposed by Rose, Bodor, Hutchinson and Swalm (2010). They establish that the framework was based on an economic model of food consumption but had been adapted to include neighbourhood effects. With this model, economists view individuals as attempting to maximize their utility from goods and will subject their tastes and preferences to budget constraint determined by their income. Food demands, or purchases, are functions of income and prices, as well as tastes and preferences.

According to Rose et al. (2010), “food cost,” was used instead of “price,” because the actual price that a consumer pays is a function of the in store price and travel costs to the store where travel costs are a function of the availability of food stores, such as supermarkets or small groceries in a consumer's vicinity, and the availability of specific foods.

Figure 2.1 Economic model of food consumption adopted to include neighbourhood



Source: Rose *et al.*, (2010, p. 38)

A detailed specification of demographic characteristics, including age, race-ethnicity, schooling, and other variables, is useful for capturing unobserved information on consumers' tastes and preferences. Such tastes and preferences might be based on cultural and ethnic groups, or they might be based on knowledge and concern of the food purchased. In-store food available, including shelf space and placement of foods near registers, has a promotional effect that can influence consumers' preferences. At high concentration, or relative shelf space availability of certain foods, e.g.,

energy-dense snack foods in corner groceries could make these foods appear more socially acceptable and thus also influence consumers' preferences.

This model is relevant to the present study in that it acknowledges income, food prices, and prices of other goods, and availability of certain foods as factors influencing food preferences of customers at food establishments. Moreover, a high concentration or availability of certain foods in the establishments such as energy-dense snack foods, could make these foods appear more socially acceptable and thus influence consumers' preferences. This model was only designed to focus on few aspects of neighborhood access and food consumption behaviour, as such, other factors have been left out.

Time constraints influence purchase decisions, because, with less time available, households are more likely to purchase convenience or prepared foods. This process, as well as decisions regarding away-from home foods, has been left out of the figure. It had drawn arrows in one direction, but food demand certainly influences supply. The model focused on details regarding the purchase of foods rather than their actual intake. But it is easy to envision that the causal chain extends further to the right, such that purchases affect intakes and ultimately weight status.

2.2.2 Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC)

Attitude-Behaviour-Context theory which was developed by Nie and Zepeda (2011), is a sociological model of environmental behaviour which incorporates contextual factors that may influence or limit one's ability to act on their intentions. Contextual factors include socio-economic and demographic variables, and community characteristics, which may limit access to organic and local foods.

Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC) theory as an overall framework contains Means-end chain (MEC) theory and Food-related lifestyle (FRL) models.

Attitude- Behavior –Context (ABC) Theory as an overall framework, and containing - Means end chain(MCE) theory, Health Belief(HB), and Food related lifestyle(FRL) models

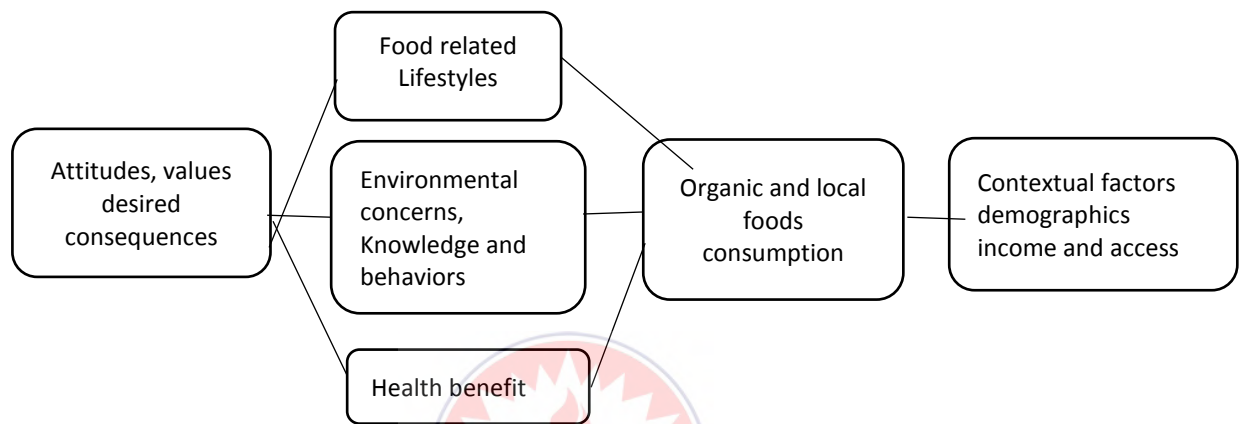


Figure 2.2: Conceptual Model for Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC)

Source: Nie and Zepeda (2011)

The Means-end chain (MEC) theory assumes that consumers choose products whose attributes, consequences and values reflect the consumers’ goals; in other words, they buy products for their functional and psychological benefits they provide. Food-related lifestyle (FRL) model is an application of MEC theory. According to FRL, there are five components of lifestyle, which mediate Attitudes, values, desired consequences between values and product attributes that motivate behaviour or intentions and which can be used to explain food purchases: ways of shopping, quality aspects, cooking methods, consumption situations, and purchasing motives.

Quality aspects refer to the attributes consumers seek from products. Cooking methods refer to how much effort and time is put into meal preparation and who is

responsible. Consumption situations addresses where and when food is eaten. Purchasing motives encompass desired consequences of a meal. The theory is considered relevant to the study as it indicates the role that demographics, income and access influence food preference which is key to the present study.

2.2.3 Practical Application of Attitude Theory

The subjective likelihood for a person taking any particular action is known as the behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen 2015). Nevertheless, a variety of external factors can be applied to the theory and the effects of the original intentions eventually changed. In a Journal of Applied Psychology article by Gotlieb et al. the researcher uses the theories of attitude described in Bagozzi (2014) and attempts to put them within a theoretical framework to describe the relationships between consistency, satisfaction and perceived controlling circumstances and behavioral intentions.

Gotlieb and others (2014) formulated two theoretical models in their research to better connect the above-mentioned variables with the attitude theories discussed before. In their first model, the sequence of cognitive events suggests that expectations > perceived quality > satisfaction > behavioral intentions are disconfirmed. In the hospitality industry this can be shown as follows. A guest orders a rare T-bone steak, which is very well prepared for the client. The guest does not like that as much as the unusual so that the price perceived is much lower, so the satisfaction was much lower. We typically have negative or unhappy behavioral motives.

On the other hand, the perceived meal consistency and satisfaction levels are greatly improved if the server brings another stuff and it is exactly what the guest ordered and cooked to perfection. The behavioral intent of the guest would therefore be more

optimistic, which might mean that the server has a higher tip. The second model is similar to the first, but states that the perceived value of satisfaction in the model should be preceded. If, in this model, the same condition as stated above was applied to the server, the guest would not be pleased and therefore the value would be much less than the original steak even if they were the same cut of meat at exactly the same price. The guest was not satisfied; therefore, a lower value is given to the meal which would then translate to a negative behavioral intention.

2.2.4 Attitude Theory in the Hospitality Industry

In the hospitality industry, guest satisfaction depends heavily on the actions of workers at the line level who have the greatest interaction with each individual customer. If a guest is unhappy with service in a facility, the principle of rational action would be that both the benefits and the repercussions of trying to appease the guest should be taken into account. Does the guest want to be satisfied? Will they decide to come back to the facility? How will a possible future guest contact impact the situation? The theory of the planned conduct reflects the activities and effects on the original employee of other employees, as well as several other factors (Bagozzi, 2016).

In the hospitality industry, the manager of guest services will be faced with certain variables. Factors like level of noise, lighting and food choice are not really controlled directly by employees of the line level. Perceived regulation of conduct enable the staff to determine the accommodation is suitable for the guest, without the blame for the problems alone. If the guest complained of lack of parking and a defective order, the staff would have to base its actions purely on poor service, not on parking faults. These two theories can be used to explain the actions of staff at the hospitality level.

2.2.5 The Guest-Server Exchange Model

Due to the highly competitive market facing the hospitality industry, many companies want to differentiate themselves from competition in order to ensure customer loyalty. Most hospitality companies are finding ways to enhance guest satisfaction with both tangible and intangible goods (Schmidt, 2015). Mark Schmidt et al. found in their article written for personnel psychology that the workers interpret the quality of the service and the level of satisfaction of the client with the service they provided. We have also reported that workers who are eight more happy assume we provide their customers with excellent service (Schlesinger & Zornitsky, 2011).

In order to better explain the direct link between employee expectations of service and customer satisfaction with the service they provide, Susskind et al. (2017) created the proposed model Guest-Server Exchange (GSX). "There are four main elements which contribute to customer satisfaction, according to GSX models: expectations for the quality of the service, cooperation with the staff, supervision support and client guidance." They claim that they are more likely than ever to give their clients better services.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Foods Preferred by Customers

In order for one to live, one must eat (Ares & Gambaro, 2017). But in all, food is not only eaten to stay alive, but also to express appreciation, sense of belonging, part of family customs, and self-realization (Dalisyay, 2012). What is eaten affects human ability to stay healthy, work, be happy, and live well. Knowledge of what to eat and in what quantities are a prerequisite to a healthy and happy life as this knowledge will help in taking the right quantity of food as the average requirements are fixed and

depend on measurable characteristics such as age, sex, height, weight and rate of growth (Offei-Ansah, 2013).

According to Rosalin and Soetanto (2016), customers' food preferences involve three main areas of concern: the nutritional requirements, the food habits preferences and the food characteristics. The nutritional requirements relate to customers' awareness of healthy food and demand for a healthier diet. Food characteristics deal with sensory properties such as taste, texture, shape, consistency, and flavour. Customers' preferences for a particular product may vary considerably between individuals, segments, groups and cultures (Ngapo, Dransfield, & Martin, 2017; Nielsen, Bech-Larsen, & Grunert, 2018).

Ross (2015) and Turner, Mayall and Mauthner (2015) have examined children's food preferences in the context of school meals. However, foods such as chips, sausages, beans, beef burgers, fish fingers, pizza, and spaghetti were mentioned by students as favourites. Less popular foods included vegetables such as sweet corn, quiches and pies, and some other food combinations. Foods, which have been freshly prepared rather than pre-cooked and reheated were also preferred by the students. Inkumsah (2012), in a study on customer satisfaction in the local Ghanaian restaurant industry, found out that *Fufu* with Light soup/*Nkontomire* soup/Groundnut soup/Palmtree soup was the most preferred and the least preferred was *Kenkey* with fried fish.

A current study by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) on traditional food preferences of tourists in Ghana have found out that 17 of the traditional foods were popular among the international tourists, with „red red“ as the most preferred food and the least preferred being *Impotupotu* (Irish stew). The issue of customers' behaviour is a complicated task, and less simple is a preference for a certain food

(Abdullahet al., 2013). Along the process, customers may express their needs and desires and still may act in a totally opposite way.

At times, it is possible that people are not even aware of the true motivations behind their buying behaviour and they could react to factors determining last minute changes to their buying decision. Although customers' decisions are relatively easy to notice and quantify, the psychophysiological processes behind them are very difficult to take into account (Edwards, 2013). Food preferences of customers have positive motivation, expressed by their effective compatibility towards a product, service or trading firm. Preferences can be triggered by the features of the food such as shape, size, taste, colour, and consistency (Ha & Jang, 2010).

According to Abdullahet al., (2013) and Honkanen and Frewer (2019), customer preference is about making choices among valued options with acceptance indicating a willingness to tolerate the status quo or some less desirable option. On the other hand, one could interpret the term „preference“ to mean evaluative judgement in the sense of liking or disliking an object, which is the most distinctive definition used in psychology (Lichtenstein & Slovic, 2016). Nevertheless, it does not mean that a preference is inevitably constant over time. Preference can be notably modified by decision-making processes, such as choices, even in an unconscious way (Namkung & Jang, 2017).

Philosophers, at some point, have the tendency to limit preference to the concept of choice. However, choice and preference are two radically different concepts: the first one is an action and the other one, a state of mind (Voicu, 2013). Preferences are the result of a long-term relationship between the brand and the consumer, as the latter learns to associate the brand with a symbol and perceives it as having high quality. Following these deep connections created over the course of time, a strong emotion is

developed which forms the basis of the preferences, remaining present even in the absence of the friendly symbol or of any other component feature.

Although a hardly comprehensible concept, it has been demonstrated that the customers' preference can be measured effectively and that their study can provide a more thorough understanding of the choices customers make, when they decide to select a particular offer as against the other, or even when they decide to continue the relationship with the offer in time (Fatimah, Boo, Sambasivan, & Salleh, 2011).

Additionally, studies have established various concepts related to preference, such as the concept of the formed preference which underlines the idea that the customers' preferences are not better defined, but rather formed along the process of choosing a constructive point of view which suggests that different tasks and contexts highlight different aspects of the options, the customer concentrating on different considerations leading to inconsistent decisions (Novemsky, Dhar, Somonson, & Schwarz, 2017).

Knowledge of customer food preferences is especially important with respect to the various activities carried out at the organizational level necessary for its survival. For instance, if an entrepreneur wants to determine the kind of food features, he wants to sell at the food service establishment, the entrepreneur will interview potential buyers asking them to mention the level of preference for each separate feature.

Customer preferences and behaviour represent the basis of the pretesting models for the new products which implies determining the functional relationships between the buyer's opinion concerning a product, testing it and the purchase behaviour (Park, 2004). The level of preferences is one of the variables that need to be taken into account when identifying the strong and weak points of the competitors. By measuring the customer food preferences before and after carrying out an advertising

campaign, the entrepreneur may evaluate its success or failure (Kotler, 2018). The preferences for certain products or brands may constitute the theme of a survey supplying information concerning the relative non-consumers attracted since these represent important means of increasing the sales volume up to the maximum limits of market potential (Lichtenstein & Slovic, 2016).

2.4 Factors Influencing Customers' Food Preference

Researchers such as Gains (2014), Khan (2011), have examined generally the factors that affect food preference and have broadly categorized these factors into three namely individual, food and environmental factors whilst Rozin and Volhmecke (2016) categorized them into biological, cultural and individual factors. From the above categorization, it is clear that all these factors are important to food preferences of individuals as well as the individual, socio-cultural, psychological, and physiological factors are recognized to exert direct or indirect effects on customers' food preferences.

Food characteristics add to sensory attributes such as taste, flavour, price, texture, health and appearance whiles the environment depicts cultural, social, economic and physical influences. Environmental factors include both internal and external physical elements such as ambience, décor, sanitation, staff and proximity.

2.4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Food Preferences

Axelsson (2016) found out that tourists' food consumption and preference at destinations are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Socio-demographic variables like age, sex, occupation, education, the number of family members and the average allowance per month have been found to influence

food preferences (Honkanen, Olsen, & Myrland, 2014; Shim, Gehrt, & Holikova, 2019). Demographic characteristics include sex, age, marital status, the highest level of education, employment status, monthly income, and religion are significant in accounting for variations in customers' food preferences.

Tokuc, Ekuklu, Berberoglu, Bilge and Dedeler (2019) affirm that age, sex, marital status, educational level, occupation, and household income largely influence the food preferences of customers in food service establishments and these factors are recognized to be important variables in explaining variations in food consumption in different contexts (Furst, Connors, Bisgni, Sobal, & Falk, 2016; Rotkowitz, 2014). Kim, Kim, and Kandampully, (2009) also recognized gender, age, and education as three socio-demographic variables that affect customers' local food consumption. In the study conducted by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), it was found out that with the exception of marital status all other socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, education and religion) have a significant relationship with tourists' preference for traditional foods in Ghana.

Sex is a physiological state that influences food preferences. Differences in food preferences between males and females have been reported (Einstein & Hornstein, 2010; Wyant & Meiselman, 2014). Sex is known to influence food choices or perceptions about food (Heideman & Jonge, 2018). Differences in eating habits between males and females exist in many countries. Females are known to be more nutrition conscious than their male counterparts, this affirmed in a study on starchy food by Monteleone, et al. and fat spread by Bower, Saadat, and Whitten (2013) established preferential differences between males and females.

In both studies, the food preferences of females were noted to be health - related. Sex has an impact on the assessment of quality and the physical environment, and these

gender differences are linked up to the influence of stereotype during gender role socialization (Ganesan-Lim, Russel-Bennet, & Dagger, 2008). Studies have shown that women prefer fruits and vegetables more than men (Kleynhans, 2013). However, other studies indicate that differences in eating habits including food preferences between the sexes are not marked in the Western culture except for quantity and caloric intake (Sim, 2009).

Men pay less attention to sales employees in making purchase decisions whilst women rely more heavily on the environment and service evaluation (Laroche, Saad, Cleveland, & Browne, 2010). Rozin (2016) points out that meat avoidance, weight concerns, and preference for low-calorie foods are higher in women in the USA. In particular, females were found to be more interested in and excited about tasting local food when on holiday. Age is described as a powerful determinant of customers' behaviour which has an individual purchasing ability and preference (Neal, Quester, & Hawkins, 2002). Age is known not to influence only the quantities of food eaten, but also the types of food and eating place (Amuquandoh, 2011).

According to Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), eating, including individual food preferences, has been perceived to change with age, thus from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Ganesan-Lim, Russel-Bennet and Dagger (2018:8) ascertain that age has a significant effect on the assessment made by customers but gender and income have no main significance. Tse and Crofts (2015) found that customers' age was negatively correlated with the number and range of their culinary explorations.

Reynolds and Hwang (2016) have observed that generation X and Y born from 1965-1976 and 1977-1994 respectively, are noted for frequent eating out whilst older consumers shy away from trying new cuisine but visit the food service industry as a

form of socialization. Kleynhans (2013) as well explains that the younger generations of customers eat out a lot because they conveniently follow food trends and try new ones. Similarly, a study by Settembre (2013) confirms that people aged between 18-29 years eat outside the home. Lakos (2013) posited that two main groups of customers who are aged between 21-30 years (35%) and 31-40 years (31%) eat outside the home more frequently and the figure keeps dropping as people advance in age. This suggests that older customers may consume a narrower range of foods available at a destination. Older respondents and interviews with higher education level were found to be more concerned about health and had a stronger desire to understand and experience foreign cultures through local food consumption.

It is established that individuals with higher income levels mostly have higher education levels and make different choices from those with lower income as well as education (Ganesan-Lim, et al., 2018). Kivela and Crofts (2016) contend that people with a higher education level might have a higher social-status occupation and can be older. Due to education, people learn a lot about foods, as foods are subject to taboos and customs, and people travel more and try other traditional foods because of the knowledge they have about them. Educational levels have been found to be related to nutrition knowledge by a number of investigators (O'Dennell, 2014; Woolcott, Kawash, & Sabry, 2011).

Culture and religion have long been recognized as major sociodemographic factors affecting general food consumption (McKercher & Chow, 2011). Culture and religion are major factors affecting the types of substances that a person considers appropriate to eat (Atkins & Bowler, 2011; Chang, et al., 2010). It defines how food is divided into „acceptable“ or „unacceptable“, and „good“ or „bad“ within a particular group (Makela, 2010). Culture and religion further impact which foods and food potentials

are acceptable in terms of their sensory properties (Prescott, Young, O'Neill, Yau, & Stevens, 2012).

This process is revealed in the existence of culturally specific „flavour principles“. According to Rozin (2006), basic foods, cooking techniques, and flavour principles are three major factors that segregate a cuisine and flavour principles refer to the distinctive seasoning groupings which characterize many cuisines. Religion is also considered as decisive determinants of food choice and consumption (Khan, 2011). Religious beliefs have an influence on food consumption when certain foods are forbidden (e.g., Islam, Judaism), precise preparation methods are required (e.g., Halal, kosher), or fasting or feasting practices are observed [e.g., Ramadan] (Packard & McWilliams, 2013).

These observed practices and limits can result in stable and rigid food habits (Khan, 2011) and thus they do not just affect food consumption in customers“ home settings, but also in the context of tourism (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2016). Islamic teachings about eating behaviour have categorized food broadly into halal (permissible) and haram (prohibited). It is obligatory that all Muslims eat only halal food, even when they are travelling in foreign destinations (Bon & Hussain, 2010). The influences of culture and religion on customer food consumption have been recognized by a number of hospitality/tourism studies.

Fox (2017) observed that Japanese, French, and Italian customers avoided local food in the host destination and always preferred to eat their own cuisine, whereas American consumers were perceived to have a slight preference for local food in the host destination. Likewise, March (2017) study, which involved interviews with various stakeholders in the travel industry, identified a number of behavioural similarities and differences among customers who originated from five Asian

outbound markets (Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand). One of the behavioural differences was food consumption pattern, which was found to be influenced by cultural or religious factors.

Hassan and Hall (2013) also found out that a vast proportion (82%) of Muslim customers visiting New Zealand would always look for halal food when travelling in New Zealand, and 39.6 percent stated that they always prepared their own meals due to a lack of knowledge of the availability of halal food in New Zealand. Alternatively, Cohen and Avieli (2004, p. 760) suggest that „while on tour, many Israelis tend to relax their avoidance of nonkosher food, but remain extremely worried about hygiene and about culturally unacceptable food such as a dog, cat, and reptile meat“.

This resounds with Rotkovitz (2014) argument that given the transient nature of tourism, even kosher-observant customers might take on greater psychological openness to experimenting with new foods or food ways when on holiday. According to March (2017; p. 234), „Muslims and Indonesians require specially prepared **halal** food, while Koreans have a strong preference for their own cuisine.“ In a study on the role of food service in vacation choice, Sheldon and Fox (2018) found that Japanese customers tended to be less willing to try new cuisines compared with U.S. and Canadian customers when holidaying in Hawaii.

Torres (2012) found discernible differences in food consumption and preferences amongst Yucatan customers of different nationalities and customer types. She found that while there was considerable demand for Mexican food, tropical fruits, and organic foods among all customers in the sample, demand appeared to be greater amongst non- American and „offbeat“ customers. Many of the above studies support Cohen and Avieli“s (2004, p. 775) contention that „Asians abroad tend to be less

disposed than Westerners to partake of the food of “others”, and are more dependent than the latter on establishments providing their own national cuisines.”

Despite the preliminary evidence presented above, relatively little is known about the specific aspects culture and religion have impacted food consumption in tourism. Until recently, a number of tourism studies have shed more light on the topic. For example, Tse and Crofts (2015) propose a link between customer culinary choice and their national culture. On the other hand, Chang et al. (2010) found that customers’ culture specific „core eating behaviour“ is a crucial factor affecting their food preferences while on holiday.

Customers are generally more willing to accept changes in „secondary“ foods (i.e., Foods eaten widely and often, but not daily) and „peripheral“ foods (i.e., Foods eaten sporadically) on holiday, yet tend to remain steadfast to „core“ foods (i.e., Staples that are consumed almost daily). This supports the core and peripheral foods model in food consumption literature Kittler and Sucher (2014) which suggests that core foods are closely associated with a culture and face the biggest resistance to be changed or modified.

Furthermore, Chang, Kivela, and Mak (2011) found that customers’ own food culture can exert a great deal of influence on their perceptions and evaluation of foreign food, particularly in terms of flavour and cooking method. The finding highlights the importance of understanding the „cultural distance“ (McKercher & Chow, 2011) and culturally-specific „flavour principles“ between customers’ native food culture and the host food culture in affecting customer food consumption. In elaborating a „grammar of foods“, Santich (2007) emphasizes the signifying power of food.

Thus, certain foods can be used to signify concepts such as tradition, modernity, masculinity and femininity. Accordingly, food, to a certain extent, reflects the social

status and self-identity of an individual. Park (2014) also emphasizes that the differences in food preferences are related to social class. For example, middle-class individuals who are rich in „cultural capital“ tend to be keen to cultivate „taste“ for exotic and foreign foods to maintain distinctiveness. The Cultural capital theory is particularly germane to explaining social class differences in food consumption behaviours in tourism.

In a recent study, Chang et al. (2010) found that middle-class Chinese customers considered eating Australian local food would enable them to acquire new food knowledge so that they could have the capacity to discuss and evaluate Australian food. Accordingly, other than socioeconomic and demographic status, social class, and cultural capital are important concepts in understanding the variations in customers“ food consumption behaviours.

2.5 Food Characteristics and Food Preferences

Food is described as the most basic and most important factor and as an integral part of the overall experience in the food service industry (Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Niles, 2009). International survey data disclose that fresh tasting, natural, home-cooked tastes are driving consumer demand around the world and not just in mature food service establishments (Abdullah, Hamali, & Abdurahman, 2011). In countries as varied as Nigeria, Brazil, Poland and China authentic and the natural-tasting food is the customer“s favourite.

In a recent survey focused on urban customers“ taste preferences, attitudes and behaviours, data revealed that more than half (55%) believe a „fresh or natural“ flavour is what makes food taste delicious, followed by „tastes as if it was made at home“ (Bon & Hussain, 2010). This was evidenced strongly by urban customers

living in China while their counterparts in Brazil said they first and foremost wanted food that „tastes as if it were made at home“ (Cohen & Avieli, 2014). These desires for fresh, natural or home-made tastes is one of the most important challenges for food producers in the face of consumer behaviour, as nearly two-thirds (64%) of urban consumers report they are using the same amount of or more processed food at home than they were 3 years ago and actively seek out food that meets their taste and health requirements (Bon & Hussain, 2010).

Food taste is regarded as the most important element of food attributes in several studies (Josiam & Monteiro, 2004; Tunsi, 2010). Taste is perceived as a core element in food that greatly influences customer intentions to purchase (Autun, Frash, Costen, & Runyan, 2010). Food is described tasty when the freshness is associated with the crispness, juiciness, and aroma (Namkung & Jang, 2018). The results of a study by Sukalakamala and Boyce (2017) indicated that consumers of Thai restaurants considered unique tastes and authentic ingredients as the most important components of their authentic dining experiences.

Similarly, Gummesson, Jonsson, Conner and Svensson (2016), Ross, (2015) and Turner, Mayall, and Mauthner (2015) found that personal preferences for taste, texture, and appearance of the food had a much greater influence on the food service establishments. In similar studies, Berge, Jonsson, and Conner (2010) argued that taste and distaste are more important for younger consumers while Roininen, Lähteenmäki, and Tourila, (2019) concluded that elderly people are more concerned about nutrition and health.

Taste is typically found to be the most, or amongst the most, important determinants of food choice (Lee, Frederick, & Ariely, 2016). Taste, in turn, is enhanced with ingredients that are over consumed by most customers – sweeteners, salt and fat

(Robinson, Borzekowski, Matheson, & Kraemer, 2017). Customers may even have expectations that unhealthy food (i.e. food high in fat, sweeteners and salt) tastes better.

Favourably descriptive menu names can increase sensory perceptions of appearance and taste just as they have been shown to influence food sales, food service attitudes and repurchase intentions (Kim et al. 2009). Previous studies have shown that descriptive names improved sales and improved expectations related to the food and the food service establishment (Wansink, Painter, & Ittersum, 2011).

Price is the amount of money charged for a product, a competitive tool and a major deciding factor influencing customers' purchase (Gregoire, 2013). Namasivayam (2014) observed that the fairness of the price has been identified as one psychological factor that influences consumers' reaction and decision to purchase. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreaut (2010) noted that the value for money from one food service industry to another or from one customer to another massively affects a customer's choice, as well as the number of times customers patronized foods.

In this light, Mensah (2009) pointed out that price is the only element of food service which brings in revenue and it is influenced by food quality, ambience, and service. It was also emphasized by Cousins, Foskett and Gillespie (2012) that customers will purchase a food not only because of the food and service, but also value for the money spent on the food. Individual food preference is also affected by price (Popkin, Duffey, & Gordon-Larsen, 2015). Several scholars have indicated price as a factor influencing customer preference (Huber, Hermann, & Wricke, 2011; Palazon & Delgado, 2009).

Available literature also shows that price is a concern to individuals (Koo, Tao, & Yeung, 2009). Concurrently, Pedraja and Yague (2011) found that customers

searched for information about a food service outlet, especially where there were price differences among outlets. In addition, studies conducted on adults and adolescents indicates price as one of the most influential factors determining food choice, second only to taste (Shannon, Story, Fulkerson, & French, 2012).

Appearance and presentation refer to the way food is decorated and attractively garnish to please the eye (Namkung& Jang, 2008). Namkung& Jang (2007) found that presentation was a significant contributor among food quality attributes in determining customer satisfaction in restaurants. The final presentation of food, whether on a plate, cafeteria counter, serving tray and buffet table, or in a display case or takeout package is an important factor in the final selection of the item. Colours have a psychological impact on customers (Rosalin & Soetanto, 2006). They emphasize the variety available on the selection and serve as an eye appeal and appetite stimulator.

Garnishing, plate decorations, and attractive colour displays add colour and should also be considered in menu planning (Rosalin & Soetanto). The texture and shape of foods also affect customers' preferences. "Soft", "hard", "crispy", "crunchy", "chewy", "smooth", "brittle", and "granny" are some of the adjectives used to describe food texture (Rosalin & Soetanto, 2006). A desirable blend of flavours is essential for creating variety in the menu. Foods can have sweet, sour, bitter, or salty flavours, which can be presented alone or in combination (Robinson et al. 2007).

The health of individuals is described as one of the reasons for eating out. Jones (2012) indicates that people who do not have domestic means or assistance or strength to prepare meals by themselves, especially the ones that require long – standing and intensive labour in preparation opt to eat healthy food outside their homes. Health

reasons for eating out is based on the nutritional and nourishing food options that are available to customers as preferences.

According to Namkung and Jang (2008) many customers who patronise food service establishments are health conscious, thus, the availability of healthy food items is becoming progressively a more considering factor in customer food preferences. Men and women for the fear of eating late which has a health implication not only to the patronage of food service establishments has prioritize their eating habit so they can avoid cooking and eating late in the evening after close of work (Davis, Lockwood, Alcott, & Pantelidis, 2012).

2.6 The Factors that Influence the Customers Decision to Dine at selected

Restaurants

Standards for service delivery are the first consideration. Sichtmann et al. (2011) conducted their research on German exporting firms to highlight how important quality control and standards for service are to giving their business a competitive edge. They focused on the role of quality control initiatives in their study, as it applied both to the product sold as well as any interaction the customer may have with the employees or management. The quality control initiatives were designed to act as a “specific, service provider-initiated directives aimed at influencing both employees and customers to perform service delivery in ways that positively affect the quality of the service outcome (Sichtmann et al., 2011).”

They concluded their study by suggesting that all workers should understand the quality control measures and that they should understand how to use them in their daily interactions with visitors. Such principles are necessary to execute a mission in an organization by describing both its staff and its management's duties and

expectations. In the hospitality sector, line staff typically have far more direct contact with visitors than management. Such requirements form the basis for ensuring that line employees provide every guest with quality customer service.

Under Litwin and Stringer (2018) organizational service standards may be defined as the major influence on the behavior of the individual in organizations and established standards consisting of the perception by members of the organization of (a) organizational objectives, (b) management expectations of employment performance and (c) the importance placed implicitly on these objectives, targets and performance.

2.6.1 Guest Loyalty and Word-of Mouth intentions

Acknowledging the effects of success, happiness, trust, dedication and the cost of shifting to word of mouth intentions in a single frame, Han & Ryu (2012) limited, empirical study tested. Service failures are likely the main reason for customer dissatisfaction and resulting negative word-of-mouth (2012). Word-of-mouth is a very important factor in the restaurant industry. If the word-of-mouth is good, it is essentially free publicity. If the word of the mouth is negative, it can mean that an organization loses a lot of potential customers.

Han and Ryu (2012) wanted to see whether the cost understanding of switching affects the guests ' words of mouth. The costs for moving services from the supplier to the other are" the expense of changing services,' including not only monetary but also non-monetary costs (Han & Ryu 2012, for example)." In other words, how much it cost a guest to avoid returning to that restaurant. It includes changing the costs of service from one provider to another The findings of the Han & Ryu study (2012) showed that the level of customer trust and loyalty in restaurants is independent of perceived changeover costs.

Setting up social relationships with individual customers by the restaurant would help strengthen customer confidence, increase customers' long-standing desire to maintain a valuable relationship, and finally boost their intention to recommend and propagate positive words of mouth (Han & Ryu 2012). (Han & Ryu, 2012). Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, Suárez-Acosta, & Aguiar-Quintana (2014) studied the effect customer loyalty had on a situation in which a service failure occurs. “Instead of having satisfaction with service recovery directly influencing guests” supportive actions, loyalty acts as a precondition to consumers” positive citizenship behavior (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, Suárez-Acosta, & Aguiar-Quintana, 2014).” A guest”s reaction to the establishment”s complaint handling can affect whether or not the customer may defect, may feel increased loyalty and plan to return to the establishment, or may share positive or negative word-of-mouth. They found that loyalty did play a large part in how the guest responded to the service recovery effort (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, Suárez-Acosta, & Aguiar-Quintana, 2014).

This reflects well on the establishment, because to have guest loyalty it must be earned through previous satisfactory visits. A loyal guest is more likely to return to the establishment, be willing to forgive service errors, and to recommend the establishment to others. Guest loyalty in the hospitality industry is a good reflection on the entire operation of that establishment.

2.6.2 Making the Choice to Eat Outside the Home

A variety of research areas will be reviewed in this section to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the research available at present. The issue of choosing the right food is examined from both the direction of choosing to eat out and choosing not to cook. It is important to understand the recent continuous change to restaurants, shopping

venues, supermarkets and convenience stores in sourcing meals from the home-cooking. This will be discussed first in the context of using prepared foods when cooking, then in the context of choosing not to cook, and finally in the context of the reasons people make the choice to eat out.

2.6.3 Convenience Foods

The first topic to be discussed is why people supplement the meals that they prepare at home with convenience foods. A that area of interest relating to convenience foods is understanding why and how consumers use convenience foods in their meal preparation. Traub et al. (2012) described a convenience food as any food in its entirety or in part prepared in which a substantial amount of time of preparation, culinary skills or energy input have been transferred from home-groom kitchens to food processors and distributors. Convenience foods are ubiquitously available and continue to become more popular in the home kitchen. It is estimated that only 34% of dinner meals were made without any commercially produced food as of 2004 (Traub et al. 2012).

Another study has shown that 57% of all foods for dinner were made from whole ingredients in 2007 (Traub et al. 2012). Such two figures obviously have their own specific restrictions, which clarify their drastic differences, but the point is that people tend to rely on prepared foods even when they cook at home. People often do not want to cook from whole ingredients, but there are plenty more reasons why they regularly use convenience foods. Sloan et al. (2018) report that "it took little time or no time to plan the first two reasons why people rely on convenience in preparing their dinners."

It shows how important it is to be able to prepare dinner quickly and simply for the American average. Americans are increasingly using comfort food to appreciate time saved more than the extra costs of buying (Sloan et al. 2018). A 33 per cent decline in real food prices for the American household's average household since 1960 has facilitated the shifting demand to more convenience foods, which has allowed for higher disposable food revenues (Sloan et al. 2018). The amount of money spent on food per household, relative to their earnings, is changed.

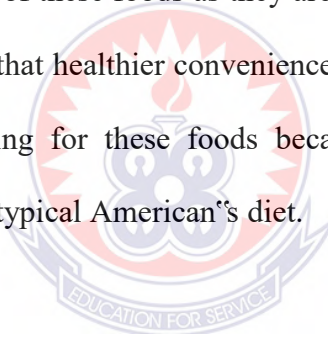
Another study found that people used convenience foods for other reasons besides as a way to save time. Costa, et al. (2015) did qualitative laddering interviews (using an interview guide to steer the interview based on responses and find out why certain things were important to participants) with 50 Dutch participants and found that for people that did use prepared meals there were a number of other reasons for using prepared meals including the reasons.

Based on these additional reasons, convenience foods not only save time, but they allow for individuals that may find cooking to be a stressful or tiring activity to avoid the cooking process altogether. As far as work performance is concerned this is likely due to the time saving effect of eating a convenience food during the work day. Of the participants in this study that did not use prepared foods, they often felt that spending less time and energy cooking “could become a source of reproach and regret” meaning that they likely would feel guilty if they used these foods instead of preparing a meal from scratch (Sloan, 2018).

Despite the differing opinions of participants, both groups of people felt that an entirely homemade meal was tastier and satisfying than commercially prepared meals. The reasons listed above represent the main reasons why people use convenience foods to supplement their meals.

In fact, many scientists believe that eating nutritious foods does not support a healthy overall diet. Hyland et al. (2016) hypothesized "There is a greater need for a diet that is far away from the current guidelines because of low cost convenience foods, many of which provide a high content of fat, free sugar, and salt combined with a low consumption of fruits and vegetables. Sloan (2018) reports that 48% of surveyed people said it helps a person to maintain a healthy diet that is the most important thing in defining a commodity food. This category was specified as more important than the following other ways to define a convenience food: little or no preparation (34%), portable (20%), packaged as a complete meal (17%) and single serving (16%).

This shows that despite the continued use of convenience foods, many people are considering the overall health of these foods as they are regularly integrated into their everyday diet. It is important that healthier convenience foods are created and offered to consumers who are looking for these foods because convenience foods have become such a large part of a typical American's diet.



2.6.4 Choosing Not to Cook at Home

It is known that people are often given the option of using pre-cooking foods, but people do not cook at all. It is also important to understand why people choose to eat from the point of view of why they do not wish to cook, why people choose to have food. It is important as it can demonstrate whether it is more important to eat out or not to cook foods cooked outside the home. It is important. Costa et al. (2015) found that people made the choice to cook at home because it involves the following consequences and values: "doing my duty, keep eating habits, enjoyment-pleasure, save money, socializing-belonging, and control" but understanding why people do not want to cook in a given night involves an entirely different set of factors.

Knowing whether the socioeconomic status of the meal is related to the time it takes to cook the food may give some reason why people don't cook. In terms of socio-economic status, the notion of time appears to be in line with cooking habits. Mancino and others (2017), in order to determine the length of time spent cooking in high-income and low-income households, carried out a multivariate study of a American Time Use Survey. It was noticed by Mancino et al. (2017) that women without a low income spend most of the time cooking a day (71 minutes) and that women spend less cooking time (38 minutes for high-income full-time female). This was a result that was expected in the study, but what they did not expect was that with increasing income for men, they had the tendency to cook more often overall.

The researcher generally believed this to be so because many women continue to cook the bulk of a certain household, and any association with men cooking is unrelated to overall family cooking. Harnack et al. (2018) research has found that women continue to be the most responsible for preparing family meals. In their 1994 continuing study on individual intakes, they surveyed 5,589 people and found that just 23% of men engaged in food preparation, 36% in shopping and 27% in meal preparedness. This trend seems to be continuing, as 88% of participants were women in a pilot cooking intervention to improve overall cooking skill. Relating back to the choice to cook or not cook, this information supports the idea that families with a lower income are less able to make a choice about whether or not to cook in a given night.

Since cooking is the cheapest option for households, low-income people will eat more often than not, even though they want to. In comparison, low-and high-income families often have higher incomes, particularly if they choose to have a longer period of leisure (Larson et al. 2013), to cooking and rely on someone else to prepare their

meals. Consumers who choose not to eat for more leisure are called "time buyers," as they are prepared to spend additional money so as not to cook.

As of 1999, the average American spend 10.4% of its disposable income on food, and when it comes to food versus food, the allocation of this money in high versus low-income families differs significantly. This is demonstrated by an increase in income that leads to higher food outside the home. For general, a 10% rise in income leads to 4% more money spent on food from home and just 1% more spent on home-crafted food. Overall, a lower level of income may lead to ' food loss by preventing people from being fully involved in food production' (Larson et al. 2013).

Whether or not a family or individual has the resources to make the option not to cook determines whether the socio-economic status, however, does not take cognitive processes into consideration when deciding whether or not to cook. A study by Larson et al. (2013) found several factors which prevented young adults from cooking. Larson et al. (2013) completed a longitudinal study with a food frequency questionnaire, which they found to be a major cause for not cooking meals for 23% of males and 18% of females cited improper cooking skills.

Besides a lack of cooking ability, 36% of young adults thought that a lack of time was the most common obstacle to food preparation. Eventually, as other key reason why young adults did not prepare their own foods was that they did not have access to a kitchen or basic foodstuffs for the study group (Larson et al., 2013). While this research is not important for other people as it concentrated on young university adults, many reasons people in this study did not want to cook emerged in other studies as well.

Stead et al (2014) have taken a general cooking course and have then tracked focus groups with 16 participants to better understand how cooking skills are an obstacle to

meal preparation. They considered 50% of their cooking skills as simple but afraid, while 25% identified their cooking skills as "unnecessary and hopeless" or "confident" (Stead, etc. (2014). The "fundamental, but terrified" community was eager to try foods that were different from their usual range and felt it needed better cooking.

The "useless and hopeless" groups argued that comfortable foods are often used and generally felt unable to cook from the ground up throughout the whole process (Stead et al. 2014). 75 percent of participants in this study expressed some mistrust in the cooking process that could lead them not to cook during a specific evening, especially when the food they want is not a cooking experience. Some of that discontent is due to a shift in the requirements that defining the expectations of a home-cooked meal.

There is increasing acceptance among researchers of the idea that the commercial food industry is now indirectly determining the criteria for what people define as good food (Stead, et al. (2014).

The perception that individual foods prepared should be like what they eat from a packaging or restaurant is a consequence of the shift (Stead, et al. 2014). On the basis of the results of the study, the researcher concluded that many people never learn or are not prepared to cook, and that cooking is only one aspect in a social and cultural framework, which is extremely complicated and safe, that is to cook. That is likely to continue in the future because people rely on people outside their homes to prepare their food and less often practice their own cooking skills. This is something that will likely continue in the future as individuals rely on people outside of their own homes to prepare their meals and practice their own cooking skills less often. Lang et al. (2012) looks at the issue of cooking skill as a barrier to cooking in a slightly different

manner. In their research they look at the shift in cooking skill in the UK in the same way as a culinary transition.

Researchers describe "a cycle where entire cultures experience major changes in habits and skills required to bring food on tables and down their throats" for the culinary transformation (Stead, et al. (2014). The scientist questions the importance of cooking in wealthy, high technology societies in particular, because they can rely on others in the preparation of food. The researchers are concerned that in the next few decades, cooking may disappear entirely due to the skill transition taking place in the UK (Stead, et al. (2014), which means that they no longer have to learn to cook. This researcher expresses how people no longer feel the need to learn to cook, it has become optional especially in areas with many other food options available. It is unlikely that cooking in the home would ever disappear entirely, but the continued decline of cooking should be a great concern if cooking at home is in any way related to maintaining a healthier overall diet. Overall, there are a number of factors that influence an individual not to cook when they are explicitly considering the act of cooking a meal from start to finish.

The main barriers that influence an individual to not cook include the availability of disposable income, an individual feeling like they have no time to cook, having a level of cooking skill they are confident with, and having accessibility to a kitchen and necessary tools. The next section will focus on what influences individuals to make the choice to eat outside the home.

2.6.5 Choosing to Eat Out

The last and most important area for this research is examining what drives people to eat as frequently as they are. Consumers choose to eat their meals more than ever

from restaurants and bars. The average American consumption is estimated to be 200 in total each year, many from restaurants with fast foods (Stewart, et al. 2016). Furthermore, the number of people who eat several meals a week has shifted. The forecast is that at least 3 times weekly breakfasts are eaten by 20 percent, at least 3 days a week by 21 percent and at least 3 times a week by January 2008 by 9 percent and at least three times a week. Overall, it is estimated that the average household spends \$1,650 per year eating outside the home. In this section, the reasons that individuals make the choice to eat out will be discussed.

In a study by Stewart, et al. (2016) researchers tried to determine what people value most when eating out in terms of convenience, taste, and nutrition. The researchers were also trying to find out whether or not participants want healthy food when they eat out and if they apply their health knowledge to the food that they eat (Stewart, et al. (2016). This study revealed a great deal of information from their sample of 700 New Jersey residents. Out of this group, they found that three-quarters of the participants ate out at least once a week, and that participants ranked the importance of the three categories in the following order: taste, nutrition, and convenience (Stewart, et al. 2016).

In addition to these three categories, they also found that there were some other reasons that participants chose to eat out including entertainment value, limited budget, and limited time (Stewart, et al. (2016). This study will be discussed again later when focusing on the convenience of eating out. In another study relating to what drives people to eat out, Kim et al. (2017) did work relating to local food consumption on trips and holidays in England. What is most interesting about this study is the assumption from the onset of the study that one would have to be in a foreign environment in order for these different factors to be applicable.

The various factors identified are likely to apply regularly to eating outside the home. While the study provides a lot of information, it does not necessarily apply to the food system in the United States and was not addressed specifically in food environments directly outside your home. In consequence, this information is only used in other researchers' work as a springboard. A lack of American restaurant literature limited the research available on what drives people to eat outside their homes. Through qualitative interviews Kim, et al. (2017) was able to find a number of different themes that arose as to why people made the choice to eat out on a trip or holiday, besides the absence of a home kitchen:

Table 2.1: Why English people eat while on vacation

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Exciting experience | • Escape from routine |
| • Health concerns | • Learning knowledge |
| • Authentic experience | • Togetherness |
| • Prestige | • Sensory appeal |
| • Physical environment | • Physiological reasons |

The four areas that relate to this research the most include eating out as an exciting experience, escape from routine, togetherness and convenience. These three topics, among many others, will be considered from the point of view of the study on eating out while on trips, but also from the point of view of other researchers.

2.6.6 Experience of Eating Out

We spoke about foods we had never eaten before as a mystery that took the task of eating a meal to a higher level than just trying to get food from that meal. Studies by Stewart, et al (2016) found that the most important factor in selecting which restaurant

to use was the satisfaction of 468 out of 1,029 persons. The convenience and good health of a particular restaurant was overlooked. From a psychological point of view, Kim et al. (2017) says it can even become a way to improve feelings through an entertaining meal that incorporates desires and satisfaction. Rust, et al. (2018) agrees with the idea that eating at a restaurant can create an exciting experience, but that it also heightens expectations for the next meal out because of the memories associated with the previous experience. This can result in an increased enticement to eat out, because the individual wants to relive or recreate positive experiences that they had outside the home in a restaurant (Rust, et al. (2018).

In addition, Sparks, et al. (2009) found that a primary motivation for eating out on a holiday was because of the discovery of new and exciting foods that someone would not normally prepare for themselves. Finally, Costa, et al. (2010) further supports the idea that eating out is exciting because of the general “excitement/adventure by creating the opportunity to come in contact with different eating cultures.”

2.6.7 Escape from Routine

The next area of interest is the escape from the routine of a restaurant. In a study carried out at Kim et al. (2017) they found that eating in restaurants on trip or on holidays is a way of escaping the usual everyday routines. Ashley, et al. (2009) contributed to this notion by saying: "Eating out is an opportunity for an event, a rare moment to be appreciated as a leisurely journey away from everyday experiences." Warde, et al. (2011) have identified many reasons to emphasize withdrawing from the routine of feeding. These reasons include:

Table 2.2: Reasons that eating out represents an escape from routine

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| • Eating different foods | • Eating at different times (i.e. holidays, weekends) |
| • Eating in different surroundings | • Eating with different company |

These are all reasons for the desire to escape home-cooked food. Home cooking tends to be related to this generally negative combination because it is often part of a daily routine. Most studies talk about the importance of consuming various foods because many people have only a typical food box that they rarely make out of (Warde, et al. 2011). Going out to eat enables people to enjoy various foods without having to leave the comfort of a meal. In addition to enjoying different foods when eating out many people enjoy the idea of being in a different environment, wearing different clothes, and being with other people. The entire experience of eating outside the home is a major part of what attracts people to restaurants. Another aspect that attracts people to restaurants are the social aspects of eating out which will be discussed next section.

2.6.8 Social/Togetherness

The social or unified dimension of eating outside the home is a major factor in the option of eating outside the home. It's often a rare thing that someone eats alone in a restaurant. Warde et al. (2011) found that 75% of people are in agreement with the assertion 'I hate eating alone' in a study based on dining out. Eating out is a way to familiarize a stranger better, build or sustain romantic relationships and celebrate major events with friends and family (Wardes, etc. 2011). Eating out can usually fulfill one's social needs. For some people, eating out can represent a social obligation to a friend or family member even if they dislike eating outside the home. This is

because eating out is commonly accepted as a mainstream way to socialize with others and for many people the food consumed is not as important as the company.

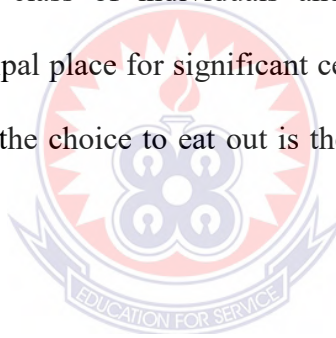
The food produced in a restaurant in this type of situation has little to do with the decision to eat. As well as social links, eating out symbolizes social class status and distinguishing. The formal character (i.e. menus, order of food served, dress code, etc.) of various restore areas may suggest, according to Ashley et al. (2009), that there is a degree of difference between people. In many types of eating situations, being comfortable often means an individual's social class. This level of comfort is often referred to as “cultural omnivorousness” and originates with research done by Bourdieu in his book *Distinction: The Social Judgement of Taste*.

Overall, the experience of eating at a restaurant is thought to be connected to an individual's aspiration for a particular social status. There is an ongoing debate among researchers in this field regarding the use of restaurants as a venue for social interaction. Researchers like Warde et al. (2011) feel that the setting of a restaurant is a positive environment for social interaction. This is because the restaurant creates an environment that can be used by many individuals for social interaction without any individual pressure over the actual location of a meeting. Warde et al. (2011) as well as Costa, et al. (2010) also felt that eating out at restaurants would not have a negative impact on family socializing and in a lot of cases it can improve the sociality of a family through the different meal experiences a family goes through over time.

However, other researchers do not regard restaurant food as a place of socialization. Finkelstein (2012 for example) felt that it was a poor choice to use restaurants as a social medium. This is because the whole meal structure outside the building is structured so that "We play role and we've fixed the roles in advance in order that we slow down." Essentially, Finkelstein says that the environment in restaurants is so far

out of control that social interactions and conversations are negatively impacted. Ashley et al. (2009) disagrees and thinks that the codified nature of restaurants may in fact result in meaningful social interactions. Either way, the structured construct of restaurant meals has resulted in a different form of social interaction that did not exist in such a significant quantity until the last fifty years.

The nature of social interactions in restaurants is still a significant field of research and debate. The researchers have been looking at a better understanding, whether or not this environment fosters or inhibits social interactions, due to the ongoing use of the physical environment as a social medium of interactions. Scholars are constantly wondering whether or not restaurants are ideal places for social interactions, whether they properly represent the class of individuals and whether the restaurant has replaced the home as a principal place for significant celebrations. The final area that will be discussed relating to the choice to eat out is the convenience that restaurants provide in America.



2.6.9 Convenience

Ultimately, because it is easy and can be used as a time-saving tool, people often choose a meal. Comfort can often motivate a person to choose to eat out. Stewart and other others (2016) have done research on the health and nutrition of 700 people in New Jersey when they are eating outside their home. We found that when people were most interested in getting their meal, we were 17% more likely to go to a fast food restaurant for a meal. Overall, convenience was the third most important attribute to the choice to eat out and the second most important reason for choosing a particular restaurant.

We also found that comfort and time are important factors for choosing to eat and that these factors often overshadow the desire for healthy meals. Ultimately, they found the quality of both food and the restaurant that they had chosen to eat to be a critical factor. The study showed that Sloan (2013) showed that moving purchasing from food to fast service restaurants in certain types of restaurants is easy. As at May 2007 ' fine restaurant traffic and high-class hotels were reduced by 4%, mid-size traffic decreased by 1%... casual food was flake and fast restaurant traffic increased by 1%.'

There are a number of things in these numbers. Firstly, the types of restaurants people eat are likely to change gradually because comfort is such an important aspect of dining out. The period that you eat at a good restaurant or a quick food restaurant is directly linked to it. In fact, the United States is also in the middle of deflation, because of the need for inexpensive, fast food, which is likely to force Americans to think more about how they are investing their disposable income. The continuous increase in the purchase of foods that are taken away shows this. This is exhibited by the continued increase in the purchase of take-out foods. The following take-out items have been able to increase greatly between 2005 and 2007:

Table 2.3: Increase in Purchase of Take-out Foods Between 2005 and 2007*

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Pizza | Pizza Increased from 41% to 53% |
| Chinese | Food Increased from 22% to 37% |
| Burgers and Other Sandwiches | Increased from 24% to 35% |
| Steak | Increased from 4% to 13% |
| Other Italian Foods | Foods Increased from 6% to 12% |

* Note – Data collected from a multiple answer survey, allowing for total percentages to eclipse 100%.

In this era, the order intake has probably grown because of financial problems and the desire to save time in getting a meal. There has been a rise in foods you'd only order at a restaurant beforehand (i.e. steak), meaning more people want a comparable meal rather than foods that are orders from an exercise center. Moreover, ordering is also cost-effective, since it eliminates the need to give the caterer or waitress a tip while eating in a restaurant. The take-out meal allows individuals to be able to eat restaurant foods without taking the time to actually sit in the restaurant and wait for them to be prepared

Overall, there are a number of different reasons that influence an individual to make the choice to eat outside the home. This section discussed the excitement of eating out, the escape from routine, the social implications, as well as the convenience of eating out. All of these factors were discussed from the point of view that these are all aspects of restaurant eating that attract people to go out to eat. The choice to go out to eat cannot just be looked at from the perspective of what attracts an individual to a restaurant. The choice not to cook or to utilize convenience foods are all both important aspects to consider because they each represent a different option when a meal-time arrives. The complexity of making the choice of what to eat was displayed through the discussion of the different options at meal-time and hopefully the importance of better understanding the interaction between the choice to cook or not cook has been made clear.

2.7 Determinants of Meal Experience

Menu

Menus are another aspect deciding the food experience and they are a list of foods written down as part of their décor and presented as restaurants to customers (Gregoire,

2013). (Gregoire, 2013). Menu served in restaurants is primarily à la carte (Hemmington, 2007, Mensah, 2009). Menus are also identified as the central feature of any eating facility by Clark and Wood (2009) and Pantelidis and Marée (2009). The menu has been described by Bell and Meiselman (2015) as written information which often includes images that encourage customers to try new dishes.



Plate 1: Menu of Montezuma Restaurant, Kumasi

Price

Price is the money paid for a foodstuff, a resource that competitively affects the consumers 'meal experience and a big determining factor (Gregoire, 2013). Namasivayam (2014) noted that price equity has been described as a psychological factor affecting the reaction of consumers and the purchasing decision. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (2010) pointed out the disparity between restaurants and customers in their value for money, as well as the massiveness with which a restaurant is funded. Through this point, Mensah (2009) pointed out that price is the only element of food service which brings in revenue and it is influenced by food quality, menu, ambience

and service. It was also emphasized by Cousins et al. (2002) that customers will re-visit a restaurant not only because of food and service but also for good value for money spent on the meal in order to achieve a positive meal experience.

Service

The delivery of food to the consumer in a food service system takes several different forms as a determinant of the meal experience (Gregoira, 2013). Service in a restaurant, however, the only point of contact with the client is the service staff (Andersson & Mossberg, 2014). Qin and Prybutok (2009) emphasize that customer loyalty is driven by quality of service.

2.8 Customer Perception of Food Quality

One of the most important aspects of the dining experience, according to Namkung and Jang, is food quality (2017). For example, Clark and Wood (2019) have identified that the key factor influencing consumers' loyalty to a restaurant is food quality. The value of food quality for restaurants is empirically explored in previous studies. Customers contrasted the price of food in the two separate restaurants with other customers. It is clearly observed that there is a significant difference between the mean rating given to quality of food ($p=0.001$), portions of food ($p=0.003$), food taste ($p=0.001$) and value for money ($p=0.005$). From the above analysis it can be concluded that there is a difference in perception of quality of food at the restaurant.

2.9 Restaurant Food Quality and Customer Satisfaction

The study found that food quality is related to consumer satisfaction. The food quality ($p=0.977$), food portions ($p=0.951$) and money value ($p=1.226$) have no important relations. It is noted, however, that customer satisfaction is correlated with good taste

($p=0.009$), but the beta is negative. There is therefore no correlation between customer satisfaction and consumer perception of food quality.

2.10 Customer Perception of Employee Service

Reliability is especially important when it comes to the hospitality industry, as any shift in the quality of good services would have negative implications for their names. We will also have to work hard to prepare their employees in order to take into account the challenges they face and the way they manage those challenges. Therefore, workers must be educated and trained to cope with all existing issues (Han et al., 2011). It can also be inferred that employee service understanding for the customer is a key factor to their satisfaction.

The client contrasted views on the kind of staff service at a restaurant with those of other clients. There is a strong difference between the mean rating given to friendliness ($p=0.000$), employee kindness ($p=0.000$) and employee ability ($p=0.000$). It is evident that there is a substantial difference. It can be inferred from the above study that the quality of food in the restaurant is different.

2.10.1 Restaurant Employee Service and Customer Satisfaction

The study describes the relationship between customer satisfaction and restaurant employee service. It is found that the friendly staff ($p=0.178$), courteous staff ($p=0.768$) and professional staff ($p=0.0.545$) do not have a substantial relationship.

2.10.2 Customer Perception of Restaurant atmosphere

This applies to the physical environment as a positive impact on the buying decision. The physical environment. By meta-analyzing, Brady and Cronin (2011) illustrated a

number of facets of service quality, which culminated in a concrete physical environment becoming an often overlooked element. This climate involves nature, environmental conditions, physical and social factors that collectively define the quality of service. It consists of internal and external architecture, ambient conditions such as smell, noise and other tangible things such as brochures, cards and other contact content.

2.10.3 Customer Perception of Interior Quality

The mean rating given to indoor beauty ($p=0.000$), purity and purity ($p=0.002$), places to go ($p=0.000$) is clearly noted. The following analysis indicates that the perception of the restaurant's inner continuity differs.

2.10.4 The relationship between restaurant atmosphere and customer satisfaction.

The attractive interiors ($p= 0,288$), a nice place ($p=0,246$) and an affordable ambience price ($p=0,720$) were not significantly related. Nevertheless, it is found that the customer's satisfaction ($p=0,016$) and positive beta value ($p=0,166$) appear clean and should be related. As a significant positive value indicates at least one factor, it can be assumed that customer satisfaction and customer perception of the environment are linked.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive research design would be used because is appropriate when the research objectives include: determining the degree to which variables are associated and making predictions regarding the occurrences of phenomena under study which is the general objective of this study. Considering the nature of this study and the conclusions it aims at drawing, the descriptive research design was adopted. This will however be adopted under the survey paradigm, with quantitative tools exploited to a very large extent. Descriptive survey can be said to be the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe phenomena (Ekure, 2009). Because the design gives an in depth descriptive analysis and a relatively more documentation of existing phenomena, it will facilitate generalization.

Moreover, quantitative research approach would be used. This was adopted to describe the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. Quantitative methods entail the collection of numeric data; hence the results will often be presented in numbers. Usually, the data is collected by use of a questionnaire (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This then will be used to assess issues bothering on figures.

3.2 Population

A research population can be defined as the totality of a well-defined collection of individuals or objects that have a common, binding characteristics or traits (Polit et al., 2006). Burns et al., (2013) added that a population is defined as all elements (individuals, objects and events) that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study. The research will be undertaken in Akayet Hotel Restaurant in Bolgatanga. The target

population will be the managers, customers, head of departments. In all 110 people would be covered.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Random sampling methods would be used to obtain the sample size of 86 participants. Auka (2013), posit that stratified random sampling ensures that all the groups (categories) are adequately sampled and this facilitates comparison among the groups. According to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970), table for determining sample size, a population of 110 requires a sample size of 86. Therefore, random sampling techniques were used to select 86 participants for the study.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

The main tool for collection of data would be questionnaire. This is necessary because the study seeks to conduct an in-depth survey that will need probing to elicit the important responses for the objectives and research questions asked by the researcher. The questionnaires consisted of four sections. Section 1 includes the gender, age, educational qualification and working experience of the respondents. Section 2 would evaluate the effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Akayet Hotel Restaurant customers. Section 3 would assess the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant and section 4 would examine how delivery service can be made a safe way on meal experience during and after COVID – 19.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher would seek permission from the various respondents before distributing the questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaire would be administered a day

after the preliminary contact. This was done during working hours between 10am – 4:00pm. The researcher would visit each respondents and personally administer the questionnaires to the respondents and collect the questionnaire later when the researcher was informed about the completion of the instrument.

3.6 Data Analysis

Given the fact that the study was descriptive in its major characteristics, descriptive statistics was used as main method of data analysis. The statistical package for social scientists (SPSS version 22) would be used to process all the quantitative responses from the questionnaire. The questionnaire items would be sorted, coded and fed into SPSS program to generate frequencies and percentages and data would be presented using frequency distribution tables.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

According to Resnik (2011), there are several reasons for adhering to ethical norms in research. Norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, falsifying or misrepresenting research data, promote the truth and avoid error. Moreover, since research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different discipline and institutions, ethical standards promote the value that are essential for collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness.

William (2016) lists some of the ethical issues as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Given the importance of ethical issues in several ways, the researcher avoided taking any ones work and where someone’s work was included, such were acknowledged. In the process of data collection, respondent’s identities were concealed

and any information obtained was handled with utmost confidentiality. The respondents were informed not to write their names and were assured of confidentiality. Even though they agreed to be part of the research they were free to step out any time they were uncomfortable. However, they all completed the questionnaires. The results of the data collected is presented in the next chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate of the Instrument

The researchers distributed a total of 86 questionnaires to customers of the selected restaurants. Nevertheless, following the data collection exercise, 84 questionnaires were returned out of the 86 questionnaires. Eighty-four (84) questionnaires were found to be suitable to produce data for a quantitative study as accurate answers. The study was therefore based on a response rate of 98 percent.

4.2 Descriptive statistics for the Demographic profile of Customers

The demographic profile of the respondents used for the study is presented in the table 4.1 below. Table 4.1 indicates that 48 (57.1%) of the respondents were males while 36 (42.9%) were females. Moreover, 23(27.4%) were between the age ranges 20- 29 years, 22 (26.2%) were above 50 years, 21 (25%) were between the age ranges 31-39 years, while 18 (21.4%) were between the age category 40-49 years. Moreover, 26 (31%) were holding Bachelor's degrees, 19 (22.6%) were possessing Diploma/HND as their highest academic qualification, 15 (17.9%) were holding SSSCE/WASSCE/O/A LEVEL, 14 (16.6%) were holding BECE/MSLC, while 10 (11.9%) were Masters degrees.

Also, 31 (36.9%) said that they eat outside home more than 5 times, 23(27.4%) eat outside home 4 times in a week, 17 (20.2%) eat outside home 3 times in a week, while 13 (15.5%) eat outside home 2 times in a week. In terms of socio-economic status, the notion of time appears to be in line with cooking habits. Mancino and others (2017), in order to determine the length of time spent cooking in high-income and

low-income households, carried out a multivariate study of American Time Use Survey. It was noticed by Mancino et al. (2017) that women with low income spend most of the time cooking a day (71 minutes) and that women spend less cooking time (38 minutes for high-income full-time female).

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics for the Demographic profile of Customers

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-------------|---------|
| | <i>n=84</i> | |
| Male | 48 | 57.1 |
| Female | 36 | 42.9 |
| <i>Age ranges</i> | | |
| 19- 29 years | 23 | 27.4 |
| 30- 39 years | 21 | 25.0 |
| 40 - 49 years | 18 | 21.4 |
| Above 50 years | 22 | 26.2 |
| <i>Educational status</i> | | |
| BECE/MSLC | 14 | 16.6 |
| SSSCE/WASSCE/O/A LEVEL | 15 | 17.9 |
| Diploma/ HND | 19 | 22.6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 26 | 31.0 |
| Masters' degree | 10 | 11.9 |
| <i>How many times in a week do you eat outside your home?</i> | | |
| 2 times | 13 | 15.5 |
| 3 times | 17 | 20.2 |
| 4 times | 23 | 27.4 |
| 5 times or more | 31 | 36.9 |

Source: Field survey, 2022, N= 84

Table 4.2: The effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Akayet Hotel**Restaurant customers.**

| <i>ITEM(S)</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | <i>N (%)</i> | <i>N (%)</i> | <i>N (%)</i> | <i>N (%)</i> | <i>N (%)</i> | |
| For hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma. | 4(4.8) | 7(8.3) | 4(4.8) | 50(59.5) | 19(22.6) | 84 (100) |
| The lockdown policy forced restaurants to close. Customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public. | 4(4.8) | 6(7.1) | 6(7.1) | 53(63.1) | 15(17.9) | 84 (100) |
| Because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. | 8(9.5) | 7(8.3) | 6(7.1) | 43(51.2) | 20(23.8) | 84 (100) |
| Many people overreacted to COVID-19 by storing supplies or going to great lengths to avoid contact with others. | 4(4.8) | 6(7.1) | 4(4.8) | 52(61.9) | 18(21.4) | 84 (100) |
| Consumers are also hesitant to go to restaurants and pubs in the context of services. | 6(7.1) | 6(7.1) | 4(4.8) | 59(70.2) | 9(10.7) | 84 (100) |
| As a result, it is critical to analyze the many aspects that may help consumers regain their desire to frequent restaurants under these conditions. | 5(6) | 5(6) | 5(6) | 50(59.5) | 19(22.6) | 84 (100) |
| Consumers' perceptions and evaluations of resale properties are influenced by the availability of private rooms in restaurants. | 4(4.8) | 5(6) | 5(6) | 52(61.9) | 18(21.4) | 84 (100) |
| The COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, compelled the entire world to adjust to a new normal. | 6(7.1) | 7(8.3) | 4(4.8) | 48(57.1) | 19(22.6) | 84 (100) |
| As a result, it's critical to understand how the perceived threat of COVID-19 influences numerous behaviours, including restaurant preference. | 3(3.6) | 5(6) | 4(4.8) | 50(59.5) | 22(26.2) | 84 (100) |
| Consumers who believe the COVID-19 threat is high are likely to favour private dining restaurants | 4(4.8) | 7(8.3) | 4(4.8) | 50(59.5) | 19(22.6) | 84 (100) |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|----------|----------|-------------|
| or private tables in a restaurant. | | | | | | |
| Pandemic anxiety might lead to avoidance behaviours including increasing physical distance from others in social interactions. | 4(4.8) | 6(7.1) | 6(7.1) | 53(63.1) | 15(17.9) | 84 (100) |
| People avoid other people who may carry COVID-19 as a result of their need for safety. | 8(9.5) | 7(8.3) | 6(7.1) | 43(51.2) | 20(23.8) | 84 (100) |

Source: Field survey, 2022, N= 84

1-Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly disagree

Table 4.2 shows that majority 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that for hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma, 19(22.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 7(8.3%) of the respondents disagreed, while 4(4.8%) strongly disagreed. Moreover, 53(63.1%) of the respondents agreed that the lock-down policy forced restaurants to close. Customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public. Also, 43(51.2%) of the respondents agreed that because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. The Ghana government has imposed a number of measures to reduce the spread of the COVID 19 disease, including but not limited to the banishment of any social gathering; the shut-down of schools, colleges and colleges and the partial lock-down of restrictions on the movements of the people. Although essential, this will have a negative effect on major sectors of the economy, especially hospitality. Today, the Ghanaian people have been frightened by the lockout, and this may maybe contribute to the dramatic rise in food prices and rises in food hosting in recent weeks.

To add more, 52(61.9%) of the respondents agreed that many people overreacted to COVID-19 by storing supplies or going to great lengths to avoid contact with others.

The study results revealed that 59(70.2%) of the respondents agreed that consumers are also hesitant to go to restaurants and pubs in the context of services. All actions that necessitate face-to-face meetings have also been postponed until the lock-down is over. Should this pandemic continue beyond what has been anticipated, Ghanaians and smallholder farmers who constitute the majority of the agricultural sector and who also have little or no access to inputs or logistics to maneuver smoothly, especially during this pandemic, will be affected. All establishments, such as supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels are to observe enhanced hygiene procedures by providing running water and soap for washing of hands and hand sanitizers.

Moreover, 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that as a result, it is critical to analyze the many aspects that may help consumers regain their desire to frequent restaurants under these conditions. Also, 52(61.9%) of the respondents agreed that consumers' perceptions and evaluations of resale properties are influenced by the availability of private rooms in restaurants. Furthermore, 48(57.1%) of the respondents agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, compelled the entire world to adjust to a new normal. Food consume outside the home was common before the pandemic covid-19 due to the fact that more women are pursuing careers outside their home, thereby making eating out a necessity for many people (Andaleed and Caskey, 2007).

The restaurant operators should always be extremely critical as it is a deciding factor in restaurant choice. In addition, restaurants located far from clients may be reduced in the sponsorship of work or residence. It would definitely surpass the projected expenditure's expected revenue. When this continues for a certain time, it is a struggle to control the institutions. These restaurants start operating at a loss and if not changed in time, some restaurants may collapse. However, there were no issues with patronage in restaurants in places of interest.

The study findings held that 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that as a result, it's critical to understand how the perceived threat of COVID-19 influences numerous behaviours, including restaurant preference. Also, 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that consumers who believe the COVID-19 threat is high are likely to favour private dining restaurants or private tables in a restaurant. Researchers have been studying the impact COVID - 19 on consumers dining behaviour shortly after the outbreak and have proposed preliminary findings. For example, in the cyber space, Mayasari et al (2018) reported that people were submitting fewer Google queries about restaurant” but searching more about delivery and take away”. In the real world young et al discovered that daily new covid - 19 cases and stay – at – home orders had negative impact on restaurant consumption, especially for full – service establishment.

To add more, 53(63.1%) of the respondents agreed that pandemic anxiety might lead to avoidance behaviours including increasing physical distance from others in social interactions. Moreover, 43(51.2%) of the respondents agreed that people avoid other people who may carry COVID-19 as a result of their need for safety.

The increase in the number of restaurant operating in Ghana is a credit to both restaurant and government, but meal experience is one of the critical determinants of successful operation of restaurants during this hard times or covid – 19 which should have attracted much attention from restaurant and researcher.

The covid – 19 Pandemic has fundamentally change the way that we all interact with each other. unsurprisingly industries and gathering have been the hard hit during lock-down. Even as restaurant begin to reopen, consumers are anxious and have new expectation for dining experiences. From the overnight rise of delivery and pick – up and the need for contactless ordering and payment options, to new way to eliminate

crowded waiting areas operators and exploring was to adopt to meet the expectations of a changed customer in order to thrive in a post – pandemic world.

4.3: The determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel

Restaurant

The second objective of the study was to assess the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant. The results below depict the descriptive statistics for the items under the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant. These factors were ranked as spicy food menu (mean score of 4.00, ranked 1st), Menus are another aspect deciding the food experience and they are a list of foods written down as part of their décor and presented as restaurants to customers (Gregoire, 2013). (Gregoire, 2013). Menu served in restaurants is primarily à la carte (Hemmington, 2007, Mensah, 2009). Menus are also identified as the central feature of any eating facility by Clark and Wood (2009) and Pantelidis and Marée (2009). The menu has been described by Bell and Meiselman (2015) as written information which often includes images that encourage customers to try new dishes. Hygiene and cleanliness (mean score of 3.90, ranked 2nd), cleanliness of restrooms and atmosphere (mean score of 3.89, ranked 3rd), value for money (mean score of 3.86, ranked 4th), This applies to the physical environment as a positive impact on the buying decision. The physical environment. By meta-analyzing, Brady and Cronin (2011) illustrated a number of facets of service quality, which culminated in a concrete physical environment becoming an often overlooked element. This climate involves nature, environmental conditions, physical and social factors that collectively define the quality of service. It consists of internal and external architecture, ambient

conditions such as smell, noise and other tangible things such as brochures, cards and other contact content.

Employee friendliness (mean score of 3.86, ranked 5th), efficient service (mean score of 3.84, ranked 6th), The delivery of food to the consumer in a food service system takes several different forms as a determinant of the meal experience (Gregoira, 2013). Service In a restaurant, however, the only point of contact with the client is the service staff (Andersson & Mossberg, 2014). Qin and Prybutok (2009) emphasize that customer loyalty is driven by quality of service.

Cultural familiarity (mean score of 3.79, ranked 7th), quality of food (mean score of 3.74, ranked 8th), taste of the food (mean score of 3.70, ranked 9th), availability of vegetarian choices (mean score of 3.67, ranked 10th). The study found that food quality is related to consumer satisfaction. The food quality ($p = 0.977$), food portions ($p = 0.951$) and money value ($p = 1.226$) have no important relations. It is noted, however, that customer satisfaction is correlated with good taste ($p=0.009$), but the beta is negative. There is therefore no correlation between customer satisfaction and consumer perception of food quality.

Availability of new items (mean score of 3.94, ranked 11th), price (mean score of 3.88, ranked 12th), Price is the money paid for a foodstuff, a resource that competitively affects the consumers 'meal experience and a big determining factor (Gregoire, 2013). Namasivayam (2014) noted that price equity has been described as a psychological factor affecting the reaction of consumers and the purchasing decision. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (2010) pointed out the disparity between restaurants and customers in their value for money, as well as the massiveness with which a restaurant is funded. Through this point, Mensah (2009) pointed out that price is the only element of food service which brings in revenue and it is influenced by food quality, menu, ambience

and service. It was also emphasized by Cousins et al. (2002) that customers will re-visit a restaurant not only because of food and service but also for good value for money spent on the meal in order to achieve a positive meal experience.

Freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish) (mean score of 3.81, ranked 13th), One of the most important aspects of the dining experience, according to Namkung and Jang, is food quality (2017). For example, Clark and Wood (2019) have identified that the key factor influencing consumers' loyalty to a restaurant is food quality. The value of food quality for restaurants is empirically explored in previous studies. Customers contrasted the price of food in the two separate restaurants with other customers. It is clearly observed that there is a significant difference between the mean rating given to quality of food ($p=0.001$), portions of food ($p=0.003$), food taste ($p=0.001$) and value for money ($p=0.005$). From the above analysis it can be concluded that there is a difference in perception of quality of food at the restaurant.

Interior or décor (mean score of 3.79, ranked 14th), exciting experience (mean score of 3.73, ranked 15th), health concerns (mean score of 3.61, ranked 16th), authentic experience (mean score of 3.56, ranked 17th), prestige (mean score of 3.50, ranked 18th), and physical environment (mean score of 3.45, ranked 19th) as shown in Table 4.3 above. These results are in agreement with the research conducted by Dwarakanath, in South Asian restaurants, the results revealed that, the most important factors for the entire sample were quality of food, taste of the food, and hygiene and cleanliness, in descending order of importance. Availability of vegetarian choices, availability of new items, and cultural familiarity were the least important factors for the whole sample. There were several factors, which showed a significant difference between respondents of South Asian origin, and those of other ethnic origin. Quality of food, and taste of the food were the only two significant factors on which respondents of other ethnic origin

had higher expectations than those of South Asian origin. The following in order of importance, are the factors on which participants of South Asian origin had higher expectations than those of other ethnic origin: hygiene and cleanliness; cleanliness of restrooms; employee friendliness; value for money; efficient service; spicy food; atmosphere; price; vegetarian choices; availability of new items; and, cultural familiarity.

Reliability is one of the procedures that is used to evaluate the internal consistency of the responses provided by the respondents. It is used to measure how consistent the respondents are in responding to the questions asked. It takes values between 0-1, where values greater than 0.90 indicates excellent reliability, 0.70-0.90 shows high reliability, 0.50-70 shows moderate reliability and 0.50 and below shows low reliability. The closer the value to one (1) the better or greater the internal consistency in the responses provided by the respondents. According to (George & Mallery, 2003) a reliability value of greater than 0.70 indicated high reliability, to show that respondents were consistent in responding to the same questions given them by the researcher to answer. The results obtain in this study has a Cronbach alpha value of 0.78 which shows that, there is high internal consistency in the responses provided by the respondents.

Restaurant cleanliness or sanitation was found to be a factor affecting customers' service quality evaluations. Becker et al. (2009) ascertained that customers in American and Hong Kong have different expectations of restaurant service with regard to restaurant sanitation (Becker, Murrmann et al. 2009).

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics for the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant

| <i>Determinants of meal experience</i> | <i>RII =</i> $\frac{\sum w}{(S * N)}$ | <i>Rank</i> |
|---|--|------------------|
| Spicy food menu | 4.00 | 1 st |
| Hygiene and cleanliness | 3.90 | 2 nd |
| Cleanliness of restrooms and Atmosphere | 3.89 | 3 rd |
| Value for money | 3.86 | 4 th |
| Employee friendliness | 3.86 | 5 th |
| Efficient service | 3.84 | 6 th |
| Cultural familiarity | 3.79 | 7 th |
| Quality of food | 3.74 | 8 th |
| Taste of the food | 3.70 | 9 th |
| Availability of vegetarian choices | 3.67 | 10 th |
| Availability of new items | 3.94 | 11 th |
| Price | 3.88 | 12 th |
| Freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish) | 3.81 | 13 th |
| Interior or décor | 3.79 | 14 th |
| Exciting experience | 3.73 | 15 th |
| Health concerns | 3.61 | 16 th |
| Authentic experience | 3.56 | 17 th |
| Prestige | 3.50 | 18 th |
| Physical environment | 3.45 | 19 th |

Source: Field survey, 2022, N= 84

Response from the Restaurant Staff

Examining how delivery service can be made a safe way on meal experience during and after COVID – 19.

Focus group discussions with the restaurant staff revealed that; food handler’s hands were properly washed with soap under running water, food handler’s toilet were

operational and clean to ensure cleanliness and personal hygiene. Moreover, personal hygiene practices were properly adhered to as nose and face masks were frequently used, and this improved the quality of the food, hand washing signs were posted and this enhanced consumer safety.

The cooks appeared in good health because of possibility of transfer of food borne diseases to customers, and the food handlers practiced proper personal hygiene practices and this improved food safety and consumer's health.

As a consequence of humans also containing microorganisms naturally or from the surrounding environment it is important to maintain an appropriate personal hygiene.

Important hygienic aspects related to Personal Hygiene includes:

1. Food vendors practicing hand washing before handling food and often during food preparation.
2. Food vendors washing hands after going to the toilet (WHO, 2010).
3. Food vendors' drying hands after hand washing procedure.
4. Food vendors wearing clean protective clothing.
5. Food vendors wearing head covering.
6. Food vendors avoiding wearing of personal effects such as jewelry, watches, pins or other items in food handling areas.
7. Food vendors ensuring that cuts and wounds are covered by suitable waterproof dressings.
8. Food vendors avoiding personal behaviour such as smoking, spitting, chewing or eating, sneezing or coughing over unprotected food

Food vendors not handling food if you know or suspect to be suffering from or to be a carrier of a disease or illness likely to be transmitted through food. (FAO Corporate Document Repository, 2009)

The ability of food-handling personnel to transmit disease is related to the degree of contact that they are likely to have with particular sorts of food. The risks they pose clearly vary widely, which raises the question whether all such personnel should be treated in the same way. Investigations of outbreaks of food borne disease throughout the world show that, in nearly all instances, they are caused by failure to observe satisfactory standards in the preparation, processing, cooking, storing or retailing of food (Nigusse and Kumie, 2012).



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the meal experience of restaurant customer in Akayet Hotel restaurant at Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region. Descriptive research design was used. Moreover, quantitative research approach was adopted. The research was undertaken in Akayet Hotel Restaurant in Bolgatanga. The target population were 110 respondents. Random sampling method was used to obtain the sample size of 86 participants. The main tool for collection of data was questionnaire. The statistical package for social scientists (SPSS version 22) was used to process all the quantitative responses from the questionnaire.

5.2 Major Findings

The effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Akayet Hotel Restaurant customers.

The study results show that majority 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that for hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma. Moreover, 53(63.1%) of the respondents agreed that the lockdown policy forced restaurants to close. Customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public. Also, 43(51.2%) of the respondents agreed that because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. To add more, 52(61.9%) of the respondents agreed that many people

overreacted to COVID-19 by storing supplies or going to great lengths to avoid contact with others.

The study results revealed that 59(70.2%) of the respondents agreed that consumers are also hesitant to go to restaurants and pubs in the context of services. Moreover, 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that as a result, it is critical to analyze the many aspects that may help consumers regain their desire to frequent restaurants under these conditions. Also, 52(61.9%) of the respondents agreed that consumers' perceptions and evaluations of resale properties are influenced by the availability of private rooms in restaurants. Furthermore, 48(57.1%) of the respondents agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, compelled the entire world to adjust to a new normal.

The study findings held that 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that as a result, it's critical to understand how the perceived threat of COVID-19 influences numerous behaviours, including restaurant preference. Also, 50(59.5%) of the respondents agreed that consumers who believe the COVID-19 threat is high are likely to favour private dining restaurants or private tables in a restaurant. To add more, 53(63.1%) of the respondents agreed that pandemic anxiety might lead to avoidance behaviours including increasing physical distance from others in social interactions. Moreover, 43(51.2%) of the respondents agreed that people avoid other people who may carry COVID-19 as a result of their need for safety.

The determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant

The second objective of the study was to assess the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant. These factors were ranked as spicy food menu (mean score of 4.00, ranked 1st), hygiene and cleanliness (mean score of 3.90, ranked 2nd), cleanliness of restrooms and atmosphere (mean score of 3.89, ranked 3rd), value

for money (mean score of 3.86, ranked 4th), employee friendliness (mean score of 3.86, ranked 5th), efficient service (mean score of 3.84, ranked 6th), Cultural familiarity (mean score of 3.79, ranked 7th), quality of food (mean score of 3.74, ranked 8th), taste of the food (mean score of 3.70, ranked 9th), availability of vegetarian choices (mean score of 3.67, ranked 10th), availability of new items (mean score of 3.94, ranked 11th), price (mean score of 3.88, ranked 12th), freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish) (mean score of 3.81, ranked 13th), interior or décor (mean score of 3.79, ranked 14th), exciting experience (mean score of 3.73, ranked 15th), health concerns (mean score of 3.61, ranked 16th), authentic experience (mean score of 3.56, ranked 17th), prestige (mean score of 3.50, ranked 18th), and physical environment (mean score of 3.45, ranked 19th) as shown in Table 4.3 above.

Examining how delivery service can be made a safe way on meal experience during and after COVID – 19.

Food handler's hands were properly washed with soap under running water, food handler's toilet were operational and clean to ensure cleanliness and personal hygiene. Moreover, personal hygiene practices were properly adhered to as nose and face masks were frequently used, and this improved the quality of the food, hand washing signs were posted and this enhanced consumer safety. The cooks appeared in good health because of possibility of transfer of food borne diseases to customers, and the food handlers practiced proper personal hygiene practices and this improved food safety and consumer's health.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concluded that, hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma and lockdown policy forced restaurants to close. Customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public. However, because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. Furthermore, many people overreacted to COVID-19 by storing supplies or going to great lengths to avoid contact with others.

Moreover, as a result, it is critical to analyze the many aspects that may help consumers regain their desire to frequent restaurants under these conditions. Also, consumers' perceptions and evaluations of resale properties are influenced by the availability of private rooms in restaurants. Furthermore, COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, compelled the entire world to adjust to a new normal. As a result, it's critical to understand how the perceived threat of COVID-19 influences numerous behaviours, including restaurant preference. Also, consumers who believe the COVID-19 threat is high are likely to favour private dining restaurants or private tables in a restaurant. To add more, pandemic anxiety might lead to avoidance behaviours including increasing physical distance from others in social interactions.

Moreover, people avoid other people who may carry COVID-19 as a result of their need for safety.

The determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant were ranked as spicy food menu, hygiene and cleanliness, cleanliness of restrooms and atmosphere, value for money, employee friendliness, efficient service, cultural familiarity, quality of food, taste of the food, availability of vegetarian choices,

availability of new items, price, freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish), interior or décor, exciting experience, health concerns, authentic experience, prestige, and physical environment.

The restaurant staff revealed that; food handler's hands were properly washed with soap under running water, food handler's toilet was operational and clean to ensure cleanliness and personal hygiene. Moreover, personal hygiene practices were properly adhered to as nose and face masks were frequently used, and this improved the quality of the food, hand washing signs were posted and this enhanced consumer safety. The cooks appeared in good health because of possibility of transfer of food borne diseases to customers, and the food handlers practiced proper personal hygiene practices and this improved food safety and consumer's health.

5.4 Recommendations

According to the conclusion remarks stated above, the study recommended that,

1. The Government of Ghana through the Bolgatanga Metropolitan Assembly should periodically inspect the premises of the restaurants operators to ensure that the eating places are neat and free from any unhygienic materials that can cause epidemic like COVID-19, cholera etc.
2. There is the need to appoint sanitary officers to inspect the quality of the food before they sold out to the customers to ensure consumer safety and protection at the various restaurants.
3. There is the need to organize health and safety training programmes for the food vendors to improve hygienic practices.
4. The food vendors should continue to use neat tables, clean water for washing of hands, clean towels for wiping hands, neatly swept environment, neat bowls and

cutlery, the cleanliness of the staff and the neatness and quality of the food to enhance safety and increase sales and profitability.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

The researcher suggested that a similar research should be conducted by enlarging the research sample size and more stakeholders to cover the other regions in Ghana to broaden the scope.



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APPENDIX A

AKENTEN APPIAH-MENKA UNIVERSITY OF SKILLS TRAINING

AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT, KUMASI

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMERS

PREAMBLE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to solicit information on the meal experience of restaurant customer in Akayet Hotel restaurant at Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region. Your contribution towards completion of this questionnaire is highly appreciated and information provided will be used only for academic purposes and treated with the utmost confidentiality. Thank you.

Section A: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Please, read the questions below and choose the answer you consider most appropriate.

1. Gender: Female [] Male []
2. Age: 19-29 years [] 30-39 years [] 40-49 years [] 50-59 years []
60-69 years [] above 70 years []
3. Education background:
Never [] BECE [] SSSCE/WASSCE [] Diploma [] Bachelors" degree []
Masters" degree [] PhD []
4. Occupation:
Please specify.....
5. How many times in a week do you eat outside your home?
0 times [] 1 times [] 2 times [] 3 times [] 4 times [] 5 times or more []

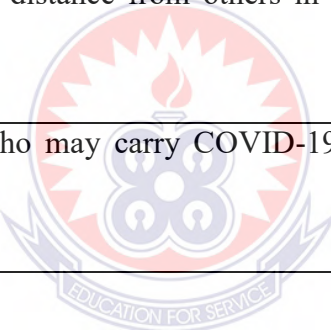
SECTION B: The effects of COVID 19 on the meal experience of Akayet Hotel**Restaurant customers.**

PLEASE TICK [✓] THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE WHEN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

SA-Strongly agree, A-Agree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly disagree

| ITEM | SA | A | D | SD |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| For hospitality enterprises like as hotels, restaurants, and bars, COVID-19 has created a serious dilemma. | | | | |
| The lockdown policy forced restaurants to close. Customers exhibited a proclivity to shun other individuals when out in public. | | | | |
| Because of the social distancing strategy, governments advised or required such enterprises to focus on delivery services or restrict dining capacity even after they reopened. | | | | |
| Restaurants have a bleak future. | | | | |
| Maintaining consumer demand throughout the crisis is vital | | | | |
| Many people overreacted to COVID-19 by storing supplies or going to great lengths to avoid contact with others. | | | | |
| Consumers are also hesitant to go to restaurants and pubs in the context of services. | | | | |
| As a result, it is critical to analyze the many aspects that may help consumers regain their desire to frequent restaurants under these conditions. | | | | |
| Consumers' perceptions and evaluations of resale properties are influenced by the availability of private rooms in | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| restaurants. | | | | |
| The COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, compelled the entire world to adjust to a new normal. | | | | |
| As a result, it's critical to understand how the perceived threat of COVID-19 influences numerous behaviors, including restaurant preference. | | | | |
| Consumers who believe the COVID-19 threat is high are likely to favor private dining restaurants or private tables in a restaurant. | | | | |
| Pandemic anxiety might lead to avoidance behaviours including increasing physical distance from others in social interactions. | | | | |
| People avoid other people who may carry COVID-19 as a result of their need for safety. | | | | |



SECTION C: The determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant

Please use the following likert scale to evaluate the determinants of meal experience of customers of Akayet Hotel Restaurant.

Scale: 1=Extremely undesirable 2= Somewhat undesirable 3=Neutral 4=Somewhat desirable 5=Extremely desirable. Please tick [] as appropriate

| Determinants of meal experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Cultural familiarity | | | | | |
| 7. Hygiene and cleanliness | | | | | |
| 8. Cleanliness of restrooms and Atmosphere | | | | | |
| 9. Value for money | | | | | |
| 10. Employee friendliness | | | | | |
| 11. Efficient service | | | | | |
| 12. Spicy food | | | | | |
| 13. Quality of food | | | | | |
| 14. Taste of the food | | | | | |
| 15. Availability of vegetarian choices | | | | | |
| 16. Availability of new items | | | | | |
| 17. Price | | | | | |
| 18. Freshness of the food (e.g. raw fish) | | | | | |
| 19. Interior or décor | | | | | |
| 20. Exciting experience | | | | | |
| 21. Health concerns | | | | | |
| 22. Authentic experience | | | | | |
| 23. Prestige | | | | | |
| 24. Physical environment | | | | | |
| 25. Escape from routine | | | | | |
| 26. Sensory appeal | | | | | |
| 27. Physiological reasons | | | | | |
| 28. Menu | | | | | |
| 29. Service | | | | | |

SECTION D: Examining how delivery service can be made a safe way on meal experience during and after COVID – 19.

PLEASE TICK[✓] THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE WHEN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

SA-Strongly agree, **A**-Agree, **D**-Disagree, **SD**-Strongly disagree

| ITEM | SA | A | D | SD |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| Cooks used nose and face masks | | | | |
| Hands are washed properly and frequently | | | | |
| Cooks cover wounds completely | | | | |
| Cooks wear clean and proper uniforms | | | | |
| Fingernails are short, unpolished and clean | | | | |
| Cooks use disposable tissues | | | | |
| Cooks appear in good health | | | | |
| Sinks are stocked with soap | | | | |
| Handwashing reminder signs are posted | | | | |
| Employees and customers toilet are operational and clean | | | | |
| Personal hygiene practices are properly adhered to | | | | |

Thanks for your Cooperation