

DETERMINANTS OF CUSTOMER PATRONAGE FOR LOCAL FOOD RESTAURANTS IN A TYPICAL SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: *This study centers on the determinants of customer patronage for local food restaurant in Awka metropolis. There exists dearth of empirical studies on the patronage behavior of customers of local food restaurants in Awka metropolis. The study employed survey design and the population of study is the customers of local food restaurants in the area. The sampling technique used was quota sampling and the sample size is 246 respondents. The research instrument was questionnaire while data collected were subjected to reliability test using factor analysis. The result of the multiple regression analysis shows that food quality is the best predictor of customer patronage of local food restaurants follow by food varieties, convenient location, cultural influence, physical environment and service quality while price is not a significant determinant. We therefore recommend that local food restaurant operators should improve on the quality of meals served; provision of varieties of meals with different spices and meals should express the culture of the customer among others.*

KEYWORDS: customer patronage, local food restaurants, food marketing, Nigeria, Sub-Saharan Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the markets getting more competitive and the working environment undergoing constant change, organizations have realized that they no longer face an expanding economic system with ever-growing markets; as a result, each and every customer has gained a new value. Customer satisfaction is considered as a factor encouraging customers to use the service again, though there is no guaranty that a satisfied customer will return for a repeat purchase (Soriano, 2002). In 1980s and 1990s, marketers and researchers mostly focused on the issue of customer satisfaction and on methods to increase customer satisfaction. But over time, marketers realized that many customers who were satisfied did not necessarily reuse the goods or services in question (Hyun, 2010).

Thus, customer patronage is considered to be an important factor for increasing profitability and maintaining the position of the organization. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) as cited in Saeed, Fared and Lodhi (2013) report a strong relationship between customer defection rate and increased

profits. According to their research, reducing the defection rate by just 5% generates between 25% and 85% more profits for the organization depending on the pertinent industry (Reichheld, 1990 as cited in Nezakati, Kuan & Asgari, 2011). Most investigations suggest that organizations should keep hold of the customers patronize them as a competitive asset.

Nowadays, due to increased employment of women outside the home and extensive changes in lifestyle, the use of restaurant food and fast food is growing in world restaurant industry, and this can provide a very good market for this industry. In the case of Nigeria, the emergence of new chain restaurants, including Crunchies, Thrillers, KFC, Tettrazini etc., and their dedication to opening new branches is an indication of this issue. Similarly, this growth trend in fast food industry has extended to restaurants that serve local meals like Abacha, Akpu, Nri Oka, Nkwobi, Isi Ewu, Amala, and Ukwa to mention but few. This observed growth in local food restaurant industry may not be unconnected to the belief that most of the contemporary fast food restaurants do not serve local cuisine or at most do not prepare it very well hence, an increase in competition between these groups that render restaurant food services. With increasing competition between these groups of restaurants, attracting new customers cannot only guarantee profits and success also; retaining existing customers is of more importance. In fact, a competitive environment provides customers with more alternatives to choose from. Thereby, they can select their favorite option from several alternatives. The importance of the customer and customer patronage is so germane. It includes financial and non-financial dimensions. Various studies have been carried out on what influences or impacts on level of customer patronage. They include- firm's capability, product or services attributes, economic situation, political forces, social and psychological factors, situational, competition, marketing mix programs (Schiffman & Kanuk 2009 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012; Kotler and Keller 2006). Experience shows that defining and measuring patronage is a difficult task. Attitude and actual usage patronages have been used as measures of customer patronages (Ogwo & Igwe 2012). Dick and Basu (1994) precisely suggested that favorable attitude and repeat purchase were pre-requisites to defining patronage. Intention to use is defined as a specific desire to continue relationship with a service provider (Czepiel and Culmore, 1987 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012). Predicting consumer patronage becomes important in defining the marketing programs of local food restaurant operators in order to give more value to their customers and as a consequence, increase patronage. In order to have an impact on and retain customers, the first step is to identify certain influencing factors for local food restaurants' patronage.

More so, customer patronage is an important factor in the customer strategy of any organization. Increasing customer patronage has become a hot topic among managers, consultants, and academic scholars (Keiningham et al., 2007). The importance of this issue is due to the fact that it leads to purchase of goods and services by the customers. Organizations and institutions that are successful in gaining customer patronage have a major competitive advantage (Aksu, 2006). Anderson and Narus (2004) believe that retaining existing customers is a much more effective strategy for the organization than attempting to attract new customers to replace the lost ones (Gee et al., 2008). As a result of facing crowded and ultra-competitive markets, service providers in many industries have switched their marketing strategy from attracting new customers to keeping existing customers through increased patronage (Shoemaker et al., 1999 as cited in Haghghi et al., 2012).

Understanding the factors that responsible for the patronage of local food restaurants could help in properly assisting and encouraging the restaurant operators to perform better since they have the potential of contributing immensely to the nation's economy. The importance of identifying and analyzing factors that influence the consumers when he/she decides to patronize local food restaurants is very crucial hence; it is a necessity for local food restaurant operators to know what determines and influences the customers.

For local food restaurant owners, it is important to understand specific decision-making criteria customers use for restaurant selection in order to be able to affect customers' selection decisions. According to Kotler et al. (2011), customers seek "a set of benefits" with various capabilities for satisfying their needs. Many marketers consider product packages for restaurants in which food and beverages are only a small part of the package. If customers also view restaurant services as a package, they will consider multiple criteria for choosing restaurants (Sloan, 2004 as cited in Ling, Mun & Ling, 2011).

Numerous studies have been done in the area of fast food marketing in general and consumer behavior in particular (Aksu, 2006; Oliver, 1999; Sabir, Irfan & Akhtar, 2014; Bharttachaharya, Sengupta & Mishra, 2011; Petzer & Mackay, 2014 and Javed & Lodhi, 2013; Ashraf et al., 2014; Nasir et al., 2014; Tat et al., 2011; Irfan et al., 2014; Sabir, et al., 2014 and Haghghi, et al., 2012). All these studies are alien to a typical Nigerian context in general and Igbo cultural setting in particular. Also, most of these studies focused on western fast-food restaurants neglecting local fast-food restaurants (restaurants that serve local delicacies) that are more prevalent in south-eastern Nigeria. It is therefore legitimate to carry out context specific study in on this subject-matter. From the foregoing, it is legitimate and timely to investigate the factors that predict consumer patronage of local food restaurants in Awka Metropolis. The general objective of this study is to empirically investigate the determinants of customer patronage for local food restaurants in Awka Metropolis. In specific terms; the study seeks:

- a. To determine effect of food quality on the patronage of local restaurants.
- b. To ascertain the effect of service quality on the patronage of local restaurants.
- c. To find out the effect of physical environment on the patronage of local restaurants.
- d. To ascertain the effect of price on the patronage of local restaurants.
- e. To know the effect of culture on the patronage of local restaurants.
- f. To determine the effect of food varieties on the patronage of local restaurants.
- g. To find out the effect of convenient location on the patronage of local restaurants.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between food quality and customer patronage.
- H₂: There is a significant relationship between convenient location and customer patronage.
- H₃: There is a significant relationship between cultural influence and customer patronage.
- H₄: There is a significant relationship between service quality and customer patronage.
- H₅: There is a significant relationship between price and customer patronage.

H6: There is a significant relationship between physical environment and customer patronage.

H7: There is a significant relationship between food varieties and customer patronage.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Customer Patronage

The customer is as old as business. The sole purpose of every business is to “Create Customer” (Drucker, 1973 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012). In addition, Drucker (1973 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012) opined that the only economic and social justification existence of any business existence is to create customer satisfaction. The importance of the customer and customer patronage is so germane. It includes financial and non-financial dimensions. Various studies have been carried out on what influences or impacts on level of customer patronage. They include-firm’s capability, product or services attributes, economic situation, political forces, social and psychological factors, situational, competition, marketing mix programs (Schiffman & Kanuk 2009 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012; Kotler and Keller 2006). Experience shows that defining and measuring patronage is a difficult task. Attitude and actual usage patronages have been used as measures of customer patronages (Ogwo & Igwe 2012). Dick and Basu (1994) precisely suggested that favorable attitude and repeat purchase were pre-requisites to defining patronage. Intention to use is defined as a specific desire to continue relationship with a service provider (Czepiel & Culmore, 1987 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012).

Attitudinal measures have an advantage over behavioral measures (actual or repeat patronage) in that they can provide greater understanding of the factors associated with the development and modification of patronage (Oliva, Oliver & MacMilian, 1992). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue that attitudes are functionally related to behavioural intentions, which predict behaviour. A person's intention to behave in a certain way is contingent upon the attitude toward performing the behaviour in question and the social pressure on him/her to behave in that way (subjective norm). This suggests that attitudes and subjective norms differ according to the person involved and behavioural context. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which is an extension of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), has introduced another factor that affects behavioural intention, which is the perceived behavioural control. Control beliefs and perceived power are the main construct of perceived behavioural control (Mackenzie & Jurs, 1993 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012).

Consumers vary in their commitment to attitude; the degree of commitment relates to their level of involvement with the attitude object. This commitment ranges from inertia to a strong emotional passion. Commitment might be based on customers’ intentions as want, expectation, plans for the future (Ogwo & Igwe 2012) and even emotional attachment to a product. We concentrated more in this study on customer’s intention to use a product in the future and recommend such to friends.

In the behavioral attitude, behavioral patronage or usage measures are based on observable responses to, object, promotional stimuli-repeat purchases, and number of purchases, usage, behavior, then attitude rather towards the product or brand (Schiffman & Kanuk 2009 as cited in Ogwo & Igwe, 2012). Critically, it neglects the psychological aspect of patronage. The theory of

reasoned action as expanded from Fishbein's model aims to measure and support behavioral intention, recognizing that certain uncontrollable factors limit our ability to predict the future with 100 percent accuracy.

Patronage Motives for Restaurants

Patronage motive is defined as the drivers of behavior that bring consumers to the marketplace to satisfy their internal needs (Jim and Kim, 2003). But in its development, a person is driver to the market not only because there is need to be purchased. The fact shows that a visit to the restaurant shop is felt not only by the desire to eat a plate of meal. Because of patronage motives a customer makes purchase from one restaurant rather than from another. These motives can be either rational or emotional. Common patronage motives include (a) customer services and policies (b) assortment (c) food quality (d) courteous sales force and (e) Restaurant location and appearance. These motives often drive customers to purchase from one restaurant rather than another.

More so, Westbrook and Black (1985) as cited in Kin and Jin (2003) categories the motive (b) experience-oriented motive and (c) Motif which is a combination of products and experience product-oriented motive refers consumers to visit the restaurant to eat, or utilitarian purpose. Experience-oriented motives on par with hedonic or recreational motives, and consider that there is an inherent pleasure in the patronage itself. Jin and Kim (2003) summarizes some patronage motives namely; intrinsic and extrinsic motives, social value and socio-economic conditions of the market.

Motives, it can be used as a basis for the implementation of marketing strategies. Patronage motives for restaurants is a function of many variable, there are some that are not related to the actual patronage. Thus, literature in marketing has shown the extent of consumer patronage motives for restaurants; that consumers are motivated by more than just utilitarian motive or hedonic motives.

Emotional and Rational Patronage Motives

Emotional Patronage Motives are those impulses which motivate and persuade a buyer to purchase from specific shops or firms. There may be no logical reasoning behind his decision to purchase from a particular shop and he may simply decide to buy from his 'most preferred' or 'favourite' shop, merely based on subjective reasons. Here also it may be the urge to gain social recognition or urge to imitate others etc. which may be responsible for the buyer developing patronage to a specific shop. If a buyer solicits a particular shop after following a logical reasoning of the mind, this is called rational patronage motives. He may select a shop because it offers a variety of products, or stocks the latest designs and models or prompt delivery or assures good after sales service. (Nair, 2004).

Criteria for Restaurant Selection

There are several of research had been done on what factors that influence consumers to choose full-service restaurant. According to Lewis (1981) as cited in Akbar and Alaudeen (2012), he considered five factors: food quality; menu variety; price; atmosphere; and convenience factors. The importance of these attributes varied according to the type of restaurant, which in Lewis' case was a category united with food type: family/popular; atmosphere; and gourmet. In all three

instances, however, food quality was found to be the most important consideration influencing restaurant selection by consumers.

In another research, Auty's (1992) as cited in Akbar and Alaudeen (2012) study more closely follows the distinct pattern set out by June and Smith (1987) as cited in Akbar and Alaudeen (2012). There are variety of choice factors in the restaurant decision process were collected and then collapsed into ten categories: food type; food quality; value for money; image and atmosphere; location; speed of service; recommended; new experience; opening hours; and facilities for children. To see if the type of restaurant chosen varied according to dining occasion, Auty also elicited four such occasions from the pilot: a celebration (e.g. birthday); a social occasion; convenience/need for a quick meal; and business meal. Auty (1992) study resulted that food types were the most important factor in choosing full-service restaurant.

This is the ranking for the ten variables that Auty had study; food type (71%); food quality (59%); value for money (46%); image and atmosphere (33%); location (32%); speed of service (15%); recommended (11%); new experience (9%); and opening hours. June and Smith (1987) noted that there are five key criteria were used in their study of customer choice among restaurants: price, atmosphere, liquor license, service and quality. Surroundings, customer turnover, location, price, quality of food, quality of service, and type of food are the factors that consumers consider in choosing restaurant. These variables were chosen because they are used in restaurant trade journals to identify strategies of competing restaurants (Reeves & Hoy, 1993). Huang (2007) stated that the consumer need evaluate the factors such price, variety of food, parking lot, reservation, and special request in choosing full-service restaurant.

Clearly, price is more important than service in affecting consumers' choice. The implication of the results is that, while service is an important factor in restaurant selection, customers are nevertheless unwilling to pay an extra amount for a higher level of service, while other things are being held constant. Hence, restaurant managers might be better off maintaining an acceptable level of service, while keeping price as low as possible. (Alan, 2001). According to Dutta and Venkatesh (2007), the major types of service failure in restaurants have been identified as – slow service; inefficient staff; food and beverage quality problem; cleanliness; unfriendly and unhelpful staff; incorrect billing; untidy staff; reservation missing; physical evidence lacking in ambience; and finally, advertised promises not having been met.

Jillian, Lester and Robert (1992) as cited in Akbar and Alaudeen (2012) stated that the factors that influencing consumer to choose restaurant are prices of meal, past experience with similar types of restaurants, reputation of restaurant among people that respondent know, convenience of location, whether any memorable advertisement seen, appearance of other customers, whether employee appropriately dressed, manner of employees, and premise. In determining the expected quality of service, price plays a surprisingly small role, the manner of the employees and the word-of-mouth again dominating respondents' perception. Martin and Frumkin (2005) stated that consumer's reasons for choosing a particular full-service restaurant, first is because of they like to be at that restaurant, convenience location, quality of food, good variety of food, and lastly price factor. Sulek and Hensley (2004) noted that the factors those influencing consumers in choosing

full-service restaurant are food quality, atmosphere, quality of the service, and interpersonal skills of the restaurant employee.

Determinants of Customer Patronage

Food Quality

Food quality is one of the most critical components of a dining experience (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Sulek & Hensley, 2004). Clark and Wood (1999) confirmed that food quality is a primary factor influencing customer loyalty in restaurant choice. While, Susskind and Chan (2000) persisted that from the customer's perspective, food quality is a key determinant for visiting a restaurant. Mattila (2001) considered food quality as a key predictor of customer loyalty in casual dining restaurants and Sulek and Hensley (2004) found that when compared with other aspects of the restaurant, such as environmental components and service quality, food quality is the most important element of customer satisfaction. Namkung and Jang (2007) tested the impact of food quality on customer patronage and behavioural intentions and found a positive relation between food quality and patronage or behavioural intentions.

Kivela et al. (2000) considered several aspects of food quality such as tastiness of food, menu variety, and nutrition to examine the effect of excellent food on customer satisfaction and return patronage. For, Raajpoot (2002), he used food presentation, serving size, menu design, and variety of food to measure product quality (food quality) in the food service industry. While, appeal as the taste, texture, colour, temperature, portion size and presentation of food. The quality of the foods should be associated with the nutritious and healthy ingredients that provide extra food values to the consumers (Wailing & Larsson, 2009). Only satisfied consumers testify that any fast food outlet is quality oriented and good for health (Ashraf & Joarder, 2010). If an individual has the information that the foods of any particular outlet constitute high quality, then that information should provide positive influence towards the individual's overall attitude and satisfaction.

Service Quality

Service quality is often viewed from two perspectives that are from the customer's cognitive evaluation of the service provided (Taylor & Baker, 1994) and a multidimensional construct created by an evaluation of attribute performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Service quality is usually defined as the customer's judgment of the overall excellence or superiority of the service (Zeithaml, 1988). Thus, it is the customer's subjective evaluation formed by comparing expectations and perceived performance (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Based on this gap theory, Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed SERVQUAL as a mechanism to measure service quality.

SERVQUAL consists of five dimensions that are reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles. In addition, since perceived levels of service in restaurants are based on the relationship between customers and service providers (Nikolich & Sparks, 1995), customer's perceptions and evaluation of service quality may be highly dependent upon the service provider's performance during service delivery. Thus, in this study service quality refers to the level of service

provided by restaurant employees. In today's service economy, many companies wrap satisfaction around their traditional offerings to sell them better (Ashraf & Joarder, 2010).

Food Varieties

The wide range of varieties of foods provides more choices to the consumers (Chavadi & Kokatnur, 2008). If any fast food outlets are looking to boost consumer satisfaction, one of the most promising places to start is maintain wider varieties of foods.

Physical Environment

The environment of the fast food outlets is important for the consumers. Especially for hedonic consumers like the Koreans (Park, 2004), who used to come to the restaurants for seeking enjoyment; clean, cozy and quite atmosphere of the restaurant can provide them enormous satisfaction. Lim (2010) Customers' ultimate satisfaction may have significant effect of atmosphere. Physical surroundings are helpful to create image in the mind of customer and to influence their behavior. Physical atmosphere of the restaurants has the significant impacts on the customers satisfaction. Lightning, furnishing, sent, music and different other atmospheric factors among them influence on customer satisfaction. On the view associated with actual physical layout, environment psychologists declare that people answer areas along with two generals, and also opposite, types of actions: strategy or even prevention (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). It is advised of which besides the actual physical measurements of the organization attracting or even deterring assortment, actual physical layout of the organization can also influence the amount associated with accomplishment consumers attain after within (Darley and also Gilbert, 1985). This involves research about the "ambiance" (Bitner, 1992) which is "artificial environment" and also how it influences both clients and also workers within the program process.

Price

Based on the basic microeconomic theories, prices are important factors that can affect the demand of purchasing goods and services negatively (Mankiw, 2006). So, cheaper prices of the foods can stimulate the consumers to consume more frequently and can induce more satisfaction. Restaurants are selected for different reasons. Skindaras (2009) there are millions of products in this world having different prices. Pricing a product is difficult thing to do. Prices are set according to the value of the product. Price from marketing mix Han (2009) state that one of the most flexible elements that changed quickly. In the literature of Khan (2011) marketing the most important factor indicated for customer satisfaction is price, because most of the customers estimate the value of the product or obtained service through price. Customers choose restaurants for many reasons like family celebration, business meetings and not having time to go home and cook food themselves (Pedraja and Yague, J). One of the most important factors of customer's purchase decision is price. In the study of Antilla (2007), consumer's price perception must be analyzed to understand its effect on their purchase decisions. Due to continuous increase in ethnical diversity, there is an increase in number of ethnic restaurants in America's food sector (Liu and Jang, 2009). The number of Chinese restaurants is more than the MacDonald's and burger king and generates about 17.5 billion dollars annually (Liu and Jang, 2009). According to Liu and Jang (2009), Chinese restaurants are facing high competition from other Asian restaurants like Indian and Thai etc., so they have to try something new because they cannot solely rely on low price and tasty food.

Objective price is the actual price of a service or a product whereas perceived price is the price encoded by the consumer or customer as distinguished by Jacob and Olsen (1977). Some consumers judge quality on the basis of the prices. If the price is high, they judge it as high quality and if the price is low then they will perceive as a product or service of inferior quality (Lambert, 1972; Shapiro, 1968). If the customer lack of awareness of product or have insufficient knowledge of a product or service then price along with other extrinsic factors can be considered as important determinants in determining the quality of a product or a service (French, Williams & Chance). But brand image is a much stronger determinant than price (Olsen, 1977). The positive relationship has mostly been found in durable products rather than consumable products (Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1970). Study of Bishop (1984) states that subsets of consumers are found that equate price with value. Price is one of the four P's of Marketing Mix that has significant role in implementation of marketing strategy. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012). Han (2009) claim that one of the most adaptable factors which improved quickly is the pricing (Andalleb *et al.*, 2006) the costs associated with restaurant merchandise furthermore vary according to style of restaurant. If your price is large, clients may very well expect premium quality." Also, in the event the price is minimal, clients may perhaps believe that restaurant is poor in terms of merchandise and also program excellent. Furthermore, because of the competition within of the restaurant industry, clients will be able to identify interior reference point price ranges inside their head plus they constantly evaluate and also analyze the values in terms of many characteristics associated with restaurant upon every acquire, an inside reference point price is understood to be an expense within potential buyers 'memory of which acts as a criteria intended for contrasting precise price ranges (Grewal *et al.*, 1998).

Price is the key element in the customer patronage in hotel industry because in Pakistan most of the customers on the price of the brand then further purchase it. According to the different research price of any product can build and can be down the standard of the brand. (Turel et al. 2006). Price is playing a vital role in the customer patronage because the charges of the product directly affect the customer, so if it is affordable then customers will keep coming and purchase the product again and again in future. (Gustafsson et al., 2005).

Convenient Location

Location is one of the most important factors in business and marketing relationship (Ferdous and chowdhury, 2010; Sharkey, Horel, Han and Huber, 2007). The location of the food outlets should have good communication systems which are conducive to build up a strong consumer relationship and to boost up overall satisfaction (Ndubisi and Chan, 2005).

Cultural Influence

Schwartz and Davis (1981) also claim that not only does ambiance and other antecedent influence customer satisfaction but as well culture, because the underlying organizational culture helps to determine the value that customers place on the service. In other words, when a Ghanaian customer repeatedly chooses an ethnic/local restaurant like Ashanti Home Touch, Mama Lit Heavy Do, Las Palmas, La Paloma, Asanka, Afrikiko, Kenkey Boutique Mukaase, Lomnava or Abga-Maami, he/she may have more positive perception of the restaurant associated with its organizational culture, which may contribute to the value of the service.

Theoretical Framework

This study adapted Sabir et al. (2014) and Ashraf et al. (2014) models of customer patronage. These models were designed majorly to measure the determining factors of customer patronage in a typical restaurant that serves local meals. This study adapted these models because they provide a real-time framework for measuring the determinants of customer patronage in local food restaurants. Also, these models provide opportunity for replicating them in a developing economy like Nigeria and in particular from the Igbo cultural perspectives so as to know whether the results from other societies are applicable in our own society.

Empirical Review

In a study conducted by Ashraf, Akhter and Noor (2014) in Dhaka city. Data were collected from students in a private industry in the city. The study aimed at identifying the determinants that influence consumer patronage in fast food marketing in Bangladesh. The results of the principal component factor analysis and SEM indicate that food quality, service quality, food variety, outlet environment and convenient location statistically significantly influence consumer patronage in the fast food industry.

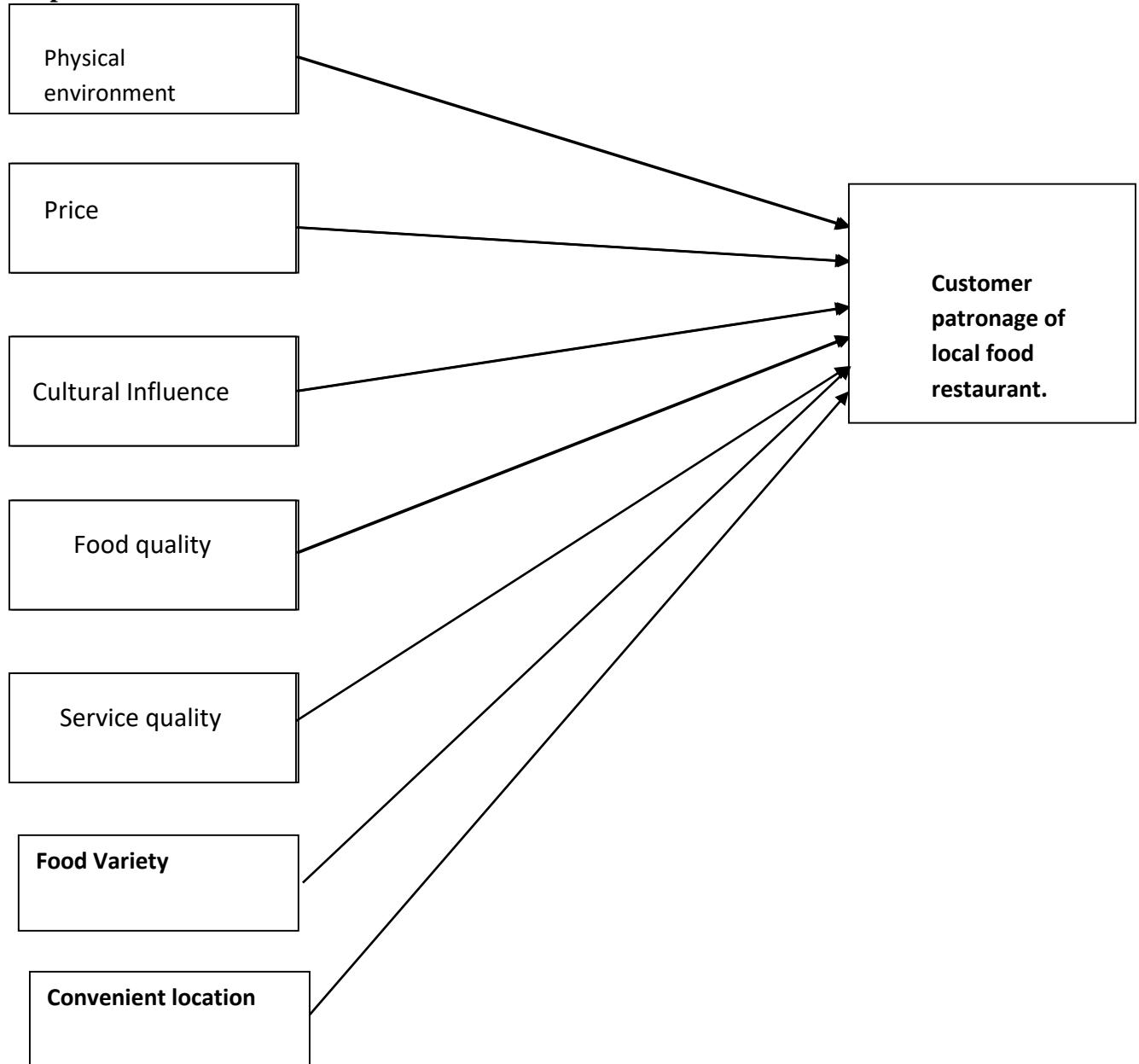
In similar vein, Nasir, Ahmed, Nazir, Zafar and Zahid (2014) carried out a study aimed at finding out the factors that are important in patronising fast food restaurants. Data were collected from 225 respondents in the cities of Gujrat, Gujranwala Punjab in Pakistan and regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The results show that food quality, exceptional employee service, environment, price and security are significant factors with price being the most significant. Moreover, Tan, Oriade and Fallon (2014) carried out an empirical study to investigate customers' perception of Chinese fast food restaurant service quality and its relationship with customer patronage. 205 respondents were used and the findings from the study revealed that service quality have positive influence on customer patronage.

Furthermore, in the Peshawar region of Pakistan, Khan, Hussian and Yaqoob (2012) conducted a study aimed at finding the key success factors that influence consumer patronage in food industry. Data were collected from 120 consumers while multiple regression and correlation test were applied. The findings show that service quality and brand are the key factors for patronage in food industry in Peshwar Pakistan. Also, Sabir, Irfan, Akhtar, Pervez and Rehman (n.d) did an empirical study to determine factors influencing consumer patronage in a typical local food restaurant in Pakistan. Stratified random sampling was adopted as the sampling technique while correlation and multiple regressions were used to test the hypotheses. It was found out that service quality, food quality, price, physical environment are significant determinants of consumer patronage.

More so, Sabir, Ghafoor, Hafeez, Akhtar and Rehman (2014) carried out a study to investigate, compare and evaluate the determinants of the customer patronage in fast food industry in Pakistan. The study adopted random sampling and 100 respondents were studied. The result of the correlation and multiple regressions show that service quality, price, and environment are positively significant determinants of customer patronage.

Also, Inkumsah (n. d) in Ghana carried out a study to measure customer satisfaction (patronage) in the local Ghanaian restaurant industry. The result of the analysis revealed that food quality, service quality and price had significant influence in determining customers' satisfaction (patronage). And that service quality has the most critical impact in determining customer satisfaction (patronage) followed by food quality and price.

Proposed Research Model



Source: *Researcher's Own Elaboration.*

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design. The population of this study comprises customers of local food restaurants in Awka metropolis. This population is unknown (infinite) since the researcher cannot obtain a sampling frame for the population. Since the population of study is unknown (infinite), the researcher considers using a formula that estimates the representativeness of the sample on certain critical parameters at an acceptable level of probability. The formula is given as;

$$N = \frac{z^2 (p)(Q)}{e^2}$$

Thus,

Z = @ 95% confidence level is 1.96 (read from the standard- normal distribution table).

P = 80% (0.80) is assumed success rate based on the pilot study

Q = 1 – 0.80 = 0.20 is assumed failure rate

e = 0.05 (since we have chosen 95% as our confidence limit)

$$\therefore N = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.80)(0.2.)}{0.05^2}$$

$$= 245.86 \approx 246$$

The sample size is 246 respondents.

Quota sampling was employed in this study because our population of study is infinite and we cannot assign probability value to every member of the sample. Questionnaire was adopted as the data collection instrument. Draft copies of the questionnaire were given to the supervisor and other lecturers as well as some research experts who went through and made comments that were used in drafting the final questionnaire; this was carried out to conduct face, content and construct validity tests. For reliability test, factor analysis through Principal Component Analysis and Communality test were employed. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was employed to explain the characteristics of the respondents while multiple regressions were employed to test the significance of the hypotheses. The data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0.

ANALYSIS

The total number of usable copies of questionnaire returned and analyzed was 236 and it amounted to 95.55% response rate. This is considered to be acceptable for the study of this nature. The first presentation is the demographic variables as shown in table 1. Five demographic variables were used namely gender, age, marital status, education and occupation. They showed that the respondents are suitable for the study and have the educational and financial willpower to participate in the study.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	149	63.1	63.1	63.1
	Female	87	36.9	36.9	100.0
	Total	236	100.0	100.0	
Age	18-25	20	8.5	8.5	8.5
	26-35	28	11.9	11.9	20.3
	36-45	120	50.8	50.8	71.2
	46 and above	68	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	236	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status	Single	20	8.5	8.5	8.5
	Married	28	11.9	11.9	20.3
	Divorced	120	50.8	50.8	71.2
	Separated	68	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	236	100	100	
Education	PLSC/O'level	20	8.5	8.5	8.5
	OND/NCE	28	11.9	11.9	20.3
	HND/BSc	120	50.8	50.8	71.2
	Post-Graduate	68	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	236	100	100	100
Occupation	Civil/Public servant	75	31.8	31.8	31.8
	Private Firm's employee	73	30.9	30.9	62.7
	Self-employed	87	36.9	36.9	100
	Total	236	100	100	

The next information is the descriptive statistics and this is shown in table 4.2 below. The table reveals that most of the items have standard deviations of less than one except customer patronage item 1, convenient location item 3, cultural influence item 3, service quality item 2 and physical environment items 1 and 4. Standard deviations above one show high variations in response; except for 6 items with high variations the other 21 items have standard deviations less than one and this shows respondents agreement with the dimensions of the research model.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
Customer patronage 1	1.37	.483	236
Customer patronage 2	2.97	1.118	236
Customer patronage 3	2.08	.810	236
Food quality 1	3.00	.865	236
Food quality 2	1.36	.576	236
Food quality 3	1.76	.723	236
Convenient location 1	2.25	.951	236
Convenient location 2	2.29	.977	236
Convenient location 3	2.58	1.110	236
Cultural influence 1	2.31	.909	236
Cultural influence 2	2.10	.917	236
Cultural influence 3	2.03	1.010	236
Cultural influence 4	2.07	.991	236
Service quality 1	2.41	.996	236
Service quality 2	2.51	1.017	236
Service quality 3	2.45	.885	236
Price 1	2.03	.903	236
Price 2	2.08	.871	236
Price 3	2.36	.899	236
Price 4	2.19	.855	236
Physical environment 1	2.31	1.064	236
Physical environment 2	2.42	.881	236
Physical environment 3	2.11	.743	236
Physical environment 4	2.03	1.209	236
Food varieties 1	2.22	.692	236
Food varieties 2	2.15	.973	236
Food varieties 3	2.41	.996	236

Factor analysis was employed to reduce the data and test the reliability of the instrument. The table below shows the results of the factor analysis show that KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .666 which is above the threshold of .5 with the Chi Square value of 3023.207 significant at .000 means that the sample is adequate to perform factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity (Sig. ≤ 0.00) confirms the result of KMO. These show that the measurement data is reliable and dependable.

**Table 4.3: Factor Analysis
KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.666
Approx. Chi-Square	3023.207
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df
	253
	Sig.
	.000

The table below reveals the communalities for the factor analysis and no item was deleted because they had high factor loading with a total variance of 74.674 hence, higher total variance is an indication of a good scale.

Table 4.4: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Customer patronage 1	1.000	.807
Customer patronage 2	1.000	.753
Customer patronage 3	1.000	.702
Food quality 1	1.000	.628
Food quality 2	1.000	.803
Food quality 3	1.000	.783
Convenient location 1	1.000	.769
Convenient location 2	1.000	.715
Convenient location 3	1.000	.870
Cultural influence 1	1.000	.714
Cultural influence 2	1.000	.788
Cultural influence 3	1.000	.758
Cultural influence 4	1.000	.762
Service quality 1	1.000	.766
Service quality 2	1.000	.817
Service quality 3	1.000	.760
Price 1	1.000	.761
Price 2	1.000	.794
Price 3	1.000	.796
Price 4	1.000	.732
Food varieties 1	1.000	.722
Food varieties 2	1.000	.745
Food varieties 3	1.000	.788

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Tests of Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, multiple linear regressions we used to test the hypotheses with factors and the results are shown below:

Table 4.5: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.767 ^a	.588	.575	.65195333	1.595

a. Predictors: (Constant), food quality, convenient location, cultural influence, service quality, Price, physical environment, food varieties

b. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

The result of the model summary of the regression analysis shows the coefficient of correlation R of .767, which is a strong correlation. The coefficient of determination R^2 is .588, which means that 58.8% of variations in customer patronage are accounted for by the independent variables. Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistic of 1.595 indicates that there exist no redundant variables that need to be expunged in the study.

Table 4.6: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	138.090	7	19.727	46.412	.000 ^b
Residual	96.910	228	.425		
Total	235.000	235			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Food quality, Service quality, Price, Convenient location, cultural influence, Physical environment, Food varieties

Table 4.6 above reveals the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the regression analysis, and from the results, the F-value of 46.412 that was significant at .000 implies that the research model is a good-fit in explaining determinants of customer patronage in the local food restaurant industry.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.412E-017	.042		.000	1.000
Food quality	.619	.059	.619	10.445	.000
Service quality	.108	.055	.108	1.966	.050
Physical environment	.124	.051	.124	2.407	.017
Price	-.061	.052	-.061	-1.176	.241
Cultural influence	.212	.058	.212	3.675	.000
Convenient location	.206	.060	.206	3.424	.001
Food varieties	-.257	.068	-.257	-3.793	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage

From the coefficients table of regression analysis above, food quality has a t-value of 10.445 and it is significant at 0.05 hence, hypothesis 1 is validated and accepted. The t-value for convenient location is 3.424 and it is significant at 0.05 hence, we accepted hypothesis 2.

For cultural influence construct, t-value is 3.675 and significant at 0.05, based on that we accepted hypothesis 3. Service quality has a t-value of 1.966 which is significant at 0.05 hence, we validated and accepted hypothesis 4. For price construct, it has a t-value of -1.176 and no significance hence, hypothesis 5 is rejected. Physical environment has a t-value of 2.407 and significant at 0.05 hence, hypothesis 6 is validated and accepted. For food varieties, it has a t-value of -3.793 but significant at 0.000 hence, we accepted hypothesis 7.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the determinants of customer patronage of local food restaurant. Empirical evidence show that food quality is the most statistically significant determinant of customer patronage of local food restaurant followed by food varieties, convenient location, cultural influence, physical environment and service quality.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, this study recommends that local food restaurant operators should improve on the quality of the meals served since it is the best predictor of customer patronage. Also, they should made available different food varieties with various spices so that the customers can make their choices.

More so, the meals should be prepared using the traditional methods that align with the culture of the customers and meals should be served using utensils that have cultural relevance to that of the customers. Furthermore, the physical environment should be appealing to the customer and portrays the kind of meals served in the restaurant. Finally, the implication of this study is that the Sabir et al. (2014) and Ashraf et al. (2014) models adapted for the study is a good fit and can be plausible models for local food restaurant operators in managing and maintaining competitive advantage and profitability in organizations.

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