

Influencing Factors on Customer Patronage of Local Food Canteen in Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract

This paper examined the influencing factors on customer patronage of local food canteen in Ibadan metropolis. Specifically, the study examined the effect of food quality, service quality, physical environment, price, and food varieties on the patronage of local food canteens in Ibadan, Oyo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study is all customers of local food canteens in the Ibadan Metropolis. This population is unknown (infinite) and since the researcher cannot obtain a sampling frame for the population the study adopted Topman's sample size formula to obtain a sample size of 246. Structured Questionnaire was employed as the main instrument of data collection. Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis were employed in analyzing the data. The analysis shows that all independent variables with the exemption of price were significant determinants of customer patronage in the local food canteens segment of the food service industry in Ibadan. The study concluded that food quality is the most statistically significant determinant of customer patronage of local food canteen followed by physical environment, service quality, price, and food varieties in that order. The study, therefore, recommended that the local food canteen operators should improve the quality of the meals served since it is the best predictor of customer patronage. The physical environment should be appealing to the customer and portray the kind of meals served in the canteen, and they should make available different food varieties with various spices at affordable prices so that the customers can make their choices.

Keywords: Food Quality, Service Quality, Physical Environment, Price, Food Varieties, Patronage, Canteen.

Introduction

Patronage from customers is thought to be crucial for boosting profitability and preserving the market position of the organisation. Most investigations suggest that organisations should keep hold of the customers patronising them as a competitive asset. In competitive situations, it is only by attracting new and retaining existing customers that an organisation can improve its chances of making profit, success, and survival.

The demand for food consumed outside the home is rising globally as a result of factors such as changing household composition, increased earnings, shifting consumption patterns, and the time constraints imposed by working couple family. The food service industry has become highly competitive as the number of food service outlets has increased to meet the ever increasing demand. A competitive environment provides customers with

more alternatives to choose from; thereby, they can select their favourite option from several alternatives. To give their consumers more value and thereby boost patronage, local food canteen owners must define their marketing strategies with the help of consumer patronage predictions.

To succeed in such a competitive industry, canteen operators need to understand the factors and their relative importance that influence canteen patrons' decisions. The local food canteen industry is a significant and growing aspect of the overall food service industry. To maintain long-term success, local food canteens must be perceived as offering sufficient value for customers, and to achieve this, canteen management must first determine what consumer value in a local food canteen experience.

Statement of the Problem

Customers' tastes and requirements are ever-changing, thus for a business to be relevant in the marketplace, it is imperative that it continuously look for new and innovative methods to provide value. The street local food industry is no longer divided into clear-cut segments since the products and services offered do sometimes overlap (Fadairo, et al., 2020). Therefore, the way and manner services are rendered by these food outlets are critical to gaining a competitive edge. Any food service provider that seeks to enjoy a competitive edge must respond to customer needs to promote satisfaction and secure continuous customer patronage. The intensity of competition has created the need for local food canteens to seek ways of serving their customers better to win their patronage. A study of this nature is necessary to determine consumer patronage patterns in this industry. Consequently, this study seeks to critically examine the extent to which food quality, service quality, physical environment, price, and provision of food varieties determine consumer patronage of local food canteen in the city of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to investigate the influencing factors on customer patronage of local food canteen in the Ibadan Metropolis. In specific terms, the study seeks to:

- i. determine the effect of food quality on the patronage of local food canteens,
- ii. ascertain the influence of service quality on the patronage of local food canteens,
- iii. examine the effect of the physical environment on the patronage of local food canteens,
- iv. find out the effect of price on the patronage of local food canteens. and
- v. examine the relationship between offering food varieties and patronage of local food canteens.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the effect of food quality on customer patronage of local food canteens?

- ii. To what extent does service quality influence customer patronage of local food canteens?
- iii. Does the physical environment have any effect on customer patronage of local food canteens?
- iv. To what extent does price affect customer patronage of local food canteens?
- v. Is there any relationship between offering food varieties and customer patronage of local food canteens?

Statements of the Hypotheses

H01: Food quality has no significant effect on customer patronage of local canteens.

H02: Service quality has no significant influence on customer patronage of local canteens.

H03: The physical environment has no significant effect on customer patronage of local canteens.

H04: Prices have no significant effect on customer patronage of local canteens.

H05: There is no significant relationship between food varieties and customer patronage of local canteens.

Conceptual Framework

Customer Patronage

A patron is someone who buys from a brand, talk favourably about the brand and its services, pays less attention to competing brands, is less price-sensitive, and adopts new services and upgrades from the brand (Nyakweba et al., 2015). In the food service industry, patronage refers to a customer's conscious decision to regularly buy cooked food from a certain restaurant or eatery rather than from other fast food service providers. Patronage could be defined as the customer's selection of an eatery from a set of alternatives. Ahmed (2015) opined that the factors that may likely influence restaurant patronage include the physical surroundings, service quality, and food quality.

Customer patronage is particularly important in the hospitality sector because firms in the sector rely on consistent patronage for business sustenance. Dutta, et al. (2014) state that the determination of customers' preferences is a key issue in consumer research because it guides marketers on how to adapt or generate value that elicits customer patronage (Njite et al., 2015). Customer patronage deals with the processes that customers engage in when selecting a product or brand among alternatives; as well as the factors and attributes used in the selection. Customer patronage is also the degree to which buying units concentrate purchases over time to a given product or brand. Customer patronage develops through positive reinforcement and repetitive buying behaviour (Nyakweba et al., 2015).

Customer patronage according to behavioural scientists results from a trial that gets reinforced through satisfaction, and leads to repeat purchases (Nyakweba et al., 2015); while cognitive psychologists suggest that customer patronage builds through mental processes, based on the belief that consumers engage in extensive problem-solving behaviour involving services. Customer patronage has, of late, been of concern to

marketers due to the phenomenon of customer switching. Adiele, (2017) among others, states that boredom and dissatisfaction with a service, availability of new service providers, and increased concern over price are the reasons for the decline in customer patronage. Eze, et al. (2015) posit that business sustenance in today's highly competitive business environment requires firms to win and keep the patronage of customers (Nwiepe & Ateke, 2016). Customer patronage is a phenomenon that requires continual observation because of the constant social, cultural, and economic changes in society which affects patronage behaviour (Nwiepe & Ateke, 2016)

Factors Influencing Customer Patronage

According to Fadairo, et al. (2020) various factors are responsible for the choice of local food canteen outlets. These were then collapsed and ranked into ten categories: 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%). The main causes of service failure in canteens, according to Dutta et al. (2014), are slow service; ineffective staff; poor food and beverage quality; cleanliness; unhelpful and unfriendly staff; incorrect billing; messy staff; missing reservations; physical evidence devoid of ambiance; and, lastly, unfulfilled promises. Sefian et al. (2013) reported that customers select a certain full-service canteen for several reasons: the canteen's convenient location, the food's quality and variety, and pricing. Khoo, et al. (2021) noted that the factors influencing consumers in choosing a full-service canteen are food quality, atmosphere, quality of the service, and interpersonal skills of the canteen employee.

Food Quality and Customer Patronage

A local food canteen is characterized as a food outlet where already prepared varieties of local food can be supplied quickly. But, regardless of how rapidly a meal service is provided, if the food is of poor quality, it will not draw in the necessary number of patrons (Ahmed, 2015). Previous studies identified food quality, service quality, and ambiance as major factors that determine canteen service quality (Dutta et al, 2014; Ogonu, & Didia, 2020; Adediran, et al., 2020). Furthermore, food quality was found to significantly affect customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions and was rated as the most important attribute influencing canteen decisions in many studies on consumer canteen selection behaviour (Alao, et al., 2020; Khoo, et al., 2021).

Food quality is one of the most critical components of a dining experience (Alao, et al. 2020). Sefian, et al. (2013) confirmed that food quality is a primary factor influencing customer loyalty in canteen choice. Akunne and Adeniji (2021) argued that food quality is a major factor in a customer's decision to visit a cafeteria. Umeanyika, et al., (2021) considered food quality as a key predictor of customer loyalty in casual dining canteens and Khoo, et al. (2021) found that when compared with other aspects of the canteen, such as environmental components and service quality, food quality is the most important element of customer satisfaction.

Ko, and Su (2015) examined the impact of food quality on customer satisfaction and repeat patronage by taking into account several food quality factors, including nutrition, menu variety, and food tastiness. For, Ogbeide, and Agbadudu, (2015), they used food presentation, serving size, menu design, and variety of food to measure product quality (food quality) in the food service industry.

Food freshness, food deliciousness, food nutrition, menu variety, and an alluring aroma are the five dimensions or aspects of food quality that Adediran and Adekunle (2020) adopted to emphasise the significance of food quality as a gauge of consumer satisfaction in the canteen business. Arguably, if customers are satisfied with the food and service quality they received in a canteen, they will likely communicate positively about the canteen and enhance a revisit to the outlet. To be seen as having higher quality food, a local food canteen needs to offer meals with fresh ingredients, reasonably high-quality meals, and consistent delivery of food. Furthermore, food quality implies that meals should be served at constant temperatures, with consistent quantity and tastes.

Service Quality and Consumer Patronage

Service quality is usually defined as the customer's judgment of the overall excellence or superiority of the service. Thus, it is the customer's subjective evaluation formed by comparing expectations and perceived performance (Sefian et al., 2013).

Physical Environment and Consumer Patronage

The environment of the local food canteen outlets is important in presenting the total package to the consumers. The physical environment can help shape a customer's perception and shape their behaviour. The physical atmosphere of the canteens like lightning, furnishing, scent, music, and other atmospheric factors can enhance customer satisfaction and influence repeat visits. Majid, et al. (2018) found that the service environment can arouse positive emotions which help to determine the value that motivates customers to repeatedly patronize a particular service provider; while Njite et al. (2015) and Adediran, et al., (2020) assert that the colourful setting of a physical environment determines the extent of customer overall satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, Okolie, and Udom, (2021) found that innovative interior design, pleasing music, unique colour, scheme, ambiance, spacious layout, appealing table settings, and attractive service staff significantly influence customer patronage and loyalty

Price and Customer Patronage

Price is often used by consumers as an extrinsic product-quality cue (Nwiepe & Ateke, 2016). It can be deduced that price or customer value is a subjective perception of the trade-off between what a customer gives up (price, sacrifice) and what the consumer receives (utility, quality, benefits). Providing value to customers is critical. Price has been observed as an important variable affecting the acceptance, and even future patronage of local food outlets. In supporting this, the studies of Nyakweba et al., (2015) and Nwiepe, and Ateke,

(2016) found that the lower the charges, the more customers consumed and the higher the patronage.

Ko and Su (2015) posited that food quality should not be at the expense of affordability and therefore, suggested that prices should be pocket-friendly for customers to patronize. As much as people relate to quality, Majid, et al. (2018) evaluated price and its relationship to customer behaviour and found that prices on quality should either motivate or discourage purchases. They also advised producers of goods and services to make an effort to make things affordable to encourage repeat patronage.

Food Varieties and Consumer Patronage

The wide range of varieties of food provides more choices to consumers (Sefian et al., 2013); and provision of choice enhances satisfaction. If any local food outlet desires to boost consumer satisfaction, one of the most promising aspects to start with is to provide wider varieties of food.

Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), which suggests that human behaviour is best predicted by an individual's stated intention to behave in a certain way. The street local food industry is one sector where the application of this theory is of immense relevance (Majid et al., 2018). The theory explains the functional relationship between attitude and subjective norm (i.e., attitude imposed by referent group) and that a person's behavioural intention is predicated on these two basic factors – attitude and subjective norm to maintain a relationship (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Therefore, a wide range of characteristics, such as the desire to purchase, enjoyment of the shopping experience, satisfaction, time spent, amount of things purchased, money spent, the share of wallet, patronage action, and repeat or re-patronage, can be used to measure patronage behaviour (Eze et al., 2015). However, this study selected five factors namely: food quality, service quality, physical environment, price, and offering varieties of food as influencing factors on customer patronage in local food canteen outlets.

Empirical Review

In a study conducted by Adiele (2017) among students in private industry in Dhaka city to identify influencing factors on consumer patronage in fast food marketing in Bangladesh. It was revealed that food quality, service quality, food variety, outlet environment, and convenient location statistically significantly influence consumer patronage. In a similar vein, Eze, et al. (2015) carried out a study aimed at finding out the factors that are significant in patronising fast food canteens. Data were collected from 225 respondents in the cities of Gujrat, and 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.

Mahapatra and Sree (2015) researched to investigate customers' perception of Chinese fast food canteen service quality and its relationship with customer patronage. The findings revealed, among 205 respondents, that service quality has a positive influence on customer patronage. Furthermore, in the Peshawar region of Pakistan, Majid, et al. (2018) conducted a study aimed at finding the key success factors that influence consumer patronage in the food industry. Data were collected from 120 consumers while multiple regression and correlation tests were applied to the hypotheses. The findings show that service quality and brand are the key factors for patronage in the food industry.

Ogbeide, and Agbadudu, (2015) carried out a study to investigate, compare, and evaluate the determinants of customer patronage in the fast food industry in Pakistan. Using random sampling, 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. Notably, it was discovered in a study by Fadairo, et al. (2020) that customers prioritised price, environment, food quality, trustworthiness, service quality, and restaurant location when selecting a typical full-service restaurant in Malaysia.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. The population of this study comprises of customers of local food canteens in the Ibadan metropolis. This population is unknown (infinite) hence Topman's formula was used to determine the sample size of 246. Descriptive statistics was employed to explain the characteristics of the respondents while multiple regressions, as embodied in SPSS 22.0, were employed to test the significance of the hypotheses.

Analysis

Out of 246 copies of the structured questionnaire administered, 236 copies, representing 95.55% were found usable for the analysis. This is considered acceptable for the study of this nature.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Table 1a: Customer Patronage

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer patronage 1	4.277	0.864
Customer patronage 2	4.101	0.934
Customer patronage 3	4.176	0.819
Average Mean	4.185	0.872

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1a shows that the majority of the respondents agreed with all the items used in measuring customer patronage as the mean scores are above 3 (Critical Value). The overall

mean of 4.185 shows that the level of customer patronage among local food canteen outlets in Ibadan is high.

Table 1b: Food Quality

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Food quality 1	3.67	1.33
Food quality 2	3.79	1.33
Food quality 3	3.57	1.34
Average Mean	3.67	1.33

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1b shows that the respondents agreed that the quality of food is the key influencing factor for patronage. The individual mean score, as well as average mean, are above the critical value of 3.0. Though inquiry on the size of food as a yardstick for food quality did not deter the Customers from patronising the preferred canteen; but, taste, color, freshness, smell, and mode of presentation ranked high in food quality.

Table 1c: Service Quality

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Service quality 1	4.037	1.026
Service quality 2	4.202	0.841
Service quality 3	4.160	0.905
Average Mean	4.133	0.924

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1c revealed that the respondents agreed with the items used in measuring the service quality of the selected local food canteen outlets as the mean scores are above 3 points of our critical value. The overall mean of 4.133 shows that the level of service quality among local food canteen outlets in Ibadan is moderately high.

Table 1d: Price

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Price 1	2.452	1.180
Price 2	2.707	1.208
Price 3	2.601	1.204
Average Mean	2.587	1.197

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1d shows that the majority of the respondents agreed that a price increase would not hinder them. It also shows that respondents disagreed with the items used in measuring the price. The local food canteen outlets provide good value for money (= 2.452; SD = 1.180);

the last purchase price affects the canteen patronage (= 2.707; SD = 1.208); and the customer preference for a particular dish is influenced by its value for money (= 2.601; SD = 1.204). The overall mean of 2.587 shows that there is a low perception of the price paid for services or foods in the selected fast food outlets in Ibadan.

Table 1e: Physical Environment

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Physical environment 1	3.878	1.114
Physical environment 2	4.149	0.895
Physical environment 3	4.149	0.846
Physical environment 4	4.186	0.015
Average Mean	4.088	0.731

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1e shows that the respondents agreed that the physical environment has significant influence on customer patronage of street local food canteens. With an average Mean of 4.088 which is above the critical value of 3 and a standard Deviation of 0.731 which is less than 1.0, this agreement is reinforced.

Table 1f: Food Varieties

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Food varieties 1	3.963	1.139
Food varieties 2	4.213	0.911
Food varieties 3	4.245	0.836
Average Mean	4.140	0.962

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1f shows that the respondents agreed that offering of variety of food has significant influence on customer patronage of street local food canteens. With an average Mean of 4.140 which is above the critical value of 3 and a standard Deviation of 0.962 which is less than 1.0, food varieties represent a significant influencing factor on patronage of street local food canteens.

Tests of Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, multiple linear regressions were used. The results are shown below:

Regression Analysis

Table 2: 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, Service quality, Price, Physical environment, Food Varieties

b. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

Source: Field Work, 2024

The result of the model summary of the regression analysis shows the coefficient of correlation R .767, which is a positive strong correlation. The coefficient of determination R^2 is .588, which means that 58.8% of variations in the dependent variable (customer patronage) are accounted for by the independent variables. An adjusted R square value of .575 indicates that the number of independent variables and the sample size of this study are large enough for a study of this magnitude. The study's Durbin-Watson (D-W) score of 1.595 suggests that no unnecessary variables need to be eliminated.

Table 3: 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, Physical environment, Food Varieties

Source: Field Work, 2024

Decision: The F-test value was 46.412 with a significance of .000; and because the p-value is less than 0.05, the model is significant. This suggests that the study model fits the data well when it comes to explaining the variables that influence patronage of the local food canteen sector.

Table 4: Coefficients

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
Food varieties	-.257	.068	-.257	-3.793	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage**Source: Field Work, 2024**

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 rejected. Service quality has a t-value of 1.966 which is significant at 0.05 hence, hypothesis 2 is rejected. For the price construct, it has a t-value of -1.176 and no significance hence, hypothesis 3 is accepted. The physical environment has a t-value of 2.407 and significant at 0.05 hence, hypothesis 4 is rejected. For food varieties, it has a t-value of -3.793 but significant at 0.05 hence, we rejected hypothesis 5.

Standardized coefficients Beta were calculated because they provide insight into the extent of importance of a predictor in the model. The Beta value for food quality (0.619) indicates that food quality had the strongest prediction on street food patronage, while physical environment is the second strongest relationship (0.124), service quality showed the third strongest predictor with 0.108; price showed the fourth strongest predictor at -0.061 and food varieties showed the fifth strongest predictor with -0.257.

Discussion of Findings

This study provided empirical support for the five hypotheses earlier stated. Food quality, service quality, physical environment, price, and provision of food varieties were all found to predict street food patronage in Ibadan, Oyo State. The five hypotheses were tested at a 5% significance level using multiple linear regressions. All independent variables with the exemption of Price were found to be statistically significant in our study. This is consistent with the findings of Dutta, et al. (2014); Ogonu, and Didia (2020); Adediran, et al. (2020); Sefian, et al. (2013); Majid, et al. (2018); Nwiepe and Ateke (2016); Adiele (2017); Mahapatra and Sree (2015); Ogbeide and Agbadudu (2015); Fadairo, et al. (2020).

However, their findings agreed that price is an influencing factor on patronage while this study held a different opinion that price was not a significant influence on patronage. The reason for this may be because of the quality of service or food rendered by these food canteens. Some customers are ready to pay more to get quality service or food. The overall mean of 2.989 shows that there is a low perception of the price paid for service or food in

the selected canteen outlets in Ibadan. From the coefficients results, it was found that price does not significantly influence customer patronage. Also, the relationship between them is negative implying that the higher the price, the lower the patronage level, all things being equal.

Conclusion

This study examined the determinants of customer patronage of street local food canteen. Empirical evidence shows that food quality is the most statistically significant determinant of customer patronage of local food canteen followed by physical environment, service quality, price, and food varieties respectively. It was concluded that good quality food of the right varieties with good quality service delivery in a clean and conducive environment, at an affordable price is vital in influencing customers' canteen preference.

Recommendations

Based on this conclusion, this study recommends that managers of local food canteens should look out for the elements that influence customers' decisions on patronage and take advantage of them by offering better dining experience packages than their competitors and being innovative when it comes to food service delivery. This will assist in satisfying the knowledgeable and demanding customers. More specifically, it is advised that:

- i. Local food canteen operators should improve the quality of the meals served since it is the best predictor of customer patronage.
- ii. the physical environment should be appealing to the customer and portray the kind of meals served in the canteen.
- iii. Canteen managers should assess their service delivery procedure critically and make sure it adheres to international best practices, which include implementing hygiene measures, educating employees on modern methods of delivering food service, and enhancing the dining area's servicescape.
- iv. Although the price can serve as a symbol of prestige, to increase market share and have wider coverage, it is suggested that affordable prices should be set for their menus.
- v. They should make available different food varieties with various spices so that the customers can make choices.
- vi. Feedback mechanisms should be put in place to gather the information that will improve customer satisfaction.

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