UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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ASSESSING CUSTOMERS' MEAL EXPERIENCE IN GRADE TWO

RESTAURANTS IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **LINDA ADU**, declare that this Thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: ………………...................…………

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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DATE: ………………………...................…….…

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely family and friends for all their efforts throughout this thesis work.

Finally, I dedicate this work to Mr. S. K. Amoakohene for his support and encouragement, which has brought me this far. I fervently pray that they live long to enjoy their blessings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT   **PAGE**

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to customer meal experience in grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis. The researcher specifically set out to It further examined the factors that influence customers' meal experience of grade two restaurant's customers in the Kumasi Metropolis. Primary data was gathered from various customers of some selected grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis through questionnaire administration. The study drew three hundred (300) customers but only two hundred and eighty-two (282) responded to the structured questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS/PASW version 20. The primary data was gathered from various customers of ten (10) selected grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis through questionnaire administration. Two hundred and eighty-two (282) customers responded to the structured questionnaire. The researcher found that background characteristics such as gender, occupation, age, monthly income and marital status influence people's decisions do dine in restaurants and majority of the sampled respondents were between the ages of 18 – 25 single. There was a significant positive relationship between the meal experience and service quality, food quality and restaurant environment. The study recommends that operators of restaurants should have a more efficient and reliable supply chain for fresh and high-quality ingredients. It is also recommended that all processes involved in food preparation must at all times be closely checked and controlled to make sure that the high standard food quality is maintained regularly to enhance customer meal experience.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the outline of the research project. The intent of this research work is to appreciate the customer meal experience in grade two restaurants in Kumasi Metropolis. It will be made up of ten components. The study comprises the background, problem statement, study objectives, study questions, hypothesis, delimitation, limitation and organisation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Meal experience is a great memory a guest or customers who patronizes or dines at any restaurant of the food and beverage service department will experience. Meal experience is a series of both tangible and intangible event a customer experience when eating out (Kotschevar & Withrow, 2008).

Meal experience is defined as any feeling a guest might have when they arrive at the restaurant, or at home, should be considered and factored in the ultimate meal experience of the customer (Kotschevar & Withrow, 2007). Basically, meal experience is very crucial to a customer because if the customer feels that the meal experience is very worthy then he or she will revisit the restaurant. Customers use restaurants for variety of reasons at different time.

Hemmington (2007) opines that in the remit of the hospitality services, guest's do not necessary look out for quality service but a refreshing experience. A meal is always considered as an important part of a leisure journey where people tirelessly draw attention to unique culinary experiences in restaurants. As indicated by Smith

1

(1967:1970) the notion of the meal experience was instituted as the effect of meal and its application on the hospitality markets.

Driver (2005) argues that when customers are out to eat, they often look out for additional components such as comfort ability of the restaurants, excellent services and not necessarily the taste of meals and drinks. The customer's instinct of having a great meal experience remains a basic perception in the industry of hospitality for a number of reasons. The hospitality operators can control customers' reactions and experiences in the way they render their services as well as their environments. At the same time, core components of the assorted drinks and food can be compensated. The quality of drinks and meal are central factors in the overall restaurant experience (Wood, 2018). The next significant aspect of the meal experience is the customer's perception with the key component of restaurants experiences.

Lashley et al. (2004) argue that the meal experience represents an event comprising symbolic and emotional element, and it's multidimensional in nature. Berry et al. (2007) also suggested three groups of cues in the service experience that are Mechanic cues (non-human element in the service environment), Functional cues such as technical quality of the service and Mumanic cues (behaviour of service staffs).

As a broad-spectrum idea, experience comprises the knowledge of reflection of object or events through exposure to or involvement (Jeong & Jang, 2011). As argued by Jeong and Jang (2011), customer's restaurant characteristic can be collected during their dining experience at the restaurant. Guests' positive experiences are planned through past experiences; guests gain their expectations from restaurant service providers. The

2
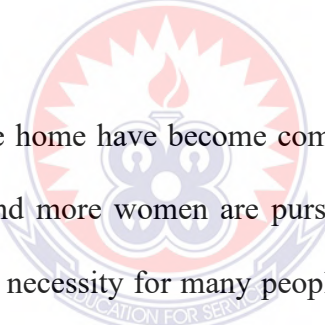
moment customers patronised a restaurant and have a feel of their service, they are cable to interpret whether the restaurant experience was good or vice versa.

The meal experience symbolises the successions of perceptible and intangible events a customer experiences when eating (Kotschevar, 2008). Customers will have their own feel on meals whether they eat at a restaurant or home. Even though, it is usually hard to tell precisely where the meal experience really commences and ends, it is commonly presumed that the essential part of the experience starts when guests arrive at the restaurant and when they vacate. Subsequently all events and activities previously and later eating can create entire experience for guest, thus the experience include eating, well priced and menu. When cafeteria or restaurant provide its basic product, the great experience of the customer will not be achieved and later remarks will be undesirable (Chi & Gursoy, 2009). However, the difficulty and complexities of guest's outlooks make it grim for a restaurant to estimate how individual customers will respond to a specific meal experience. Customers do not only need service provided at dining places, but also anticipate an unforgettable experience. Unforgettable dish experience, comes with positive verbal communication and guest satisfaction which are regarded crucial to the booming of restaurant service.

Payne (2005) asserts that in restaurant services, quality service is the intangible aspect of the meal experience and a focused appraisal that echoes the consumer's perceptions of particular dimensions of service. In enhancing customer tastes, Vis responsiveness assurance, reliability, empathy and tangibles, customer happiness is determined by the perception of product quality, price and quality of service as well as environment and personal factors. Customers are happy by the food or service they have obtained to be

good as it is expected to be Satisfactory and also be linked with feelings of pleasure for the meal experience that makes the customer happy or felt good.

However, the primary fact is that customer happiness is very crucial since, it reflects individual consumer appraisal of the characteristic performance associated with the meal experience. Moreover, majority of the working class in recent times, hugely rely on snacks meals, lunch meals throughout the day as it is regarded as time-saving products due to their busy lifestyle. In addition, people these days want fast and convenient meals (Mark, 1999). They are not interest in spending more time to prepare food or wait for food while dining in restaurants. As a result, customers depend heavily on restaurants service.

Foods consumed outside the home have become common these days and this is partly due to the fact that more and more women are pursuing careers outside their homes, thereby making eating out a necessity for many people (Andaleeb & Caskey, 2007). In the US, eating of food not prepared from their home but the eat-up joints have been noted to be on the ascendency. For instance, in 1970 about one-third of all spending's on food was observed to be prevalent in eat-up joints rather than food prepared at homes but by 2012, that statistics had risen to 43.1 percent (US Department of Agriculture, 2012). In Ghana, though there is lack of statistics on patronage of food services, there is anecdotal evidence that restaurants in especially Accra, Takoradi and Kumasi have seen increased patronage. This has created a concomitant growth in the number of food service establishments.

4

A restaurant is a facility that is well suited for the preparations and selling of food and beverage to the public. These include cafeterias, brasseries, bistros, café shop, salad bars, grilled or steak houses, fast food outlets, food court etc. The edifice could be an enclosed space or opened facility which may occupy an entire building or certain portions of the building (Ghana tourism authority 2013).

There has been an increase in restaurants in Kumasi Metropolis such as Sweet bits, Sambra, Jofel, Mckeown, It's my Kitchen, Queens Gate and others. The new harmonized standards for Accommodation and Restaurant's Establishment in Ghana put food services facilities into six main categories namely, restaurants, traditional catering establishment, drinking bars, snack bars, outdoor catering establishment and fast food vendor. Restaurants are further classified into three grades (grade one, two and three) depending on the quality of service and facility.

Grade one restaurants are almost the same as to luxury restaurants that have excellent ambiance and design, admirable quality finishing features, fittings, all-embracing cuisine, faultless, professional perfect and high level of service, superior quality tableware and linen and a varied motley of drinks and wine whereas grade two restaurants which would be the focus for this study are high standard of cuisine, setup in a very calm ambiance, favourable to dining with good quality finishing and skilled service staff to offer exceptional service (Ghana Tourism Authority 2013). According to Ghana Tourism Authority (2013) Kumasi Metropolis has twenty (20) grade two restaurants operating in the food service industry. However, it makes it hard for a restaurant operator to guess how each customer will respond to the type quality of food, service and surroundings which are the component of meal experience. Restaurant

5

environment has very crucial influence on customer's notion with respect to the total value of the restaurant, which will directly influence consumer's happiness (Ryu & Jang, 2008). Thus, it is imperative for the restaurant operator to be equipped with the necessary understanding and knowledge with regards to their consumers request in order to provide consumers with the best experience when they are relishing their meals. Hence, it is important to carry out a survey in order to determine whether serenity of the area and cleanliness will have an effect on meal experience in the grade two facilities. According to US empirical research explains Post-purchase behavioural intention, as the possibility of customers to revisit and recommend restaurant to others. A research done by Korea restaurant in Seoul simply stated that post-purchase behavioural intention as visiting more frequently and recommend to others say positive thing and revisit the restaurant in the future.

Fraikue and Osman, (2017) argue that, post-purchased behavioural intention is the future behaviour commitment to buy a product or service while other alternatives are possible. Moreover, post-purchased behavioural intention is a revisit intention, recommendation and substitute intention. However, revisit intention is characterised as a situation where by a customer aims to patronize the same premises numerous times. A positive recommendation, mostly takes when a customer has enjoyed a dish, obtains better services, enjoyed varieties of meals or paid a reasonable price of food. On the other hand, alternative intention occurs when unhappy customers take negative actions include words of mouth criticisms, switching purchases another restaurant or reject and complaining thereby decreasing the rate of patronage.

The study therefore seeks to assess customer meal experience of grade two restaurant's in Kumasi Metropolis because grade two restaurants are many as compare to grade one

and three in the Kumasi Metropolis and their turn out are high, despite the outbreak of the Corona Virus epidemic outbreak in Ghana, customers were still patronizing grade two restaurants foods and services. The study will also examine customer perception of meal experience and the post behavioural intention of grade two restaurants of Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti region.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies on restaurants meal experience have increased in the last decade. Warde and Martens (2000) carried out an overall examination of the entire meal experience. The difficulty of the restaurant industry in dealing with the complexities of clients' expectation makes it very hard for them to forecast the individual needs of customers during stay at the facility (Pantelidis, 2010).

The restaurants seem to find great difficulty about determine the influence of demographic variables on customer meal experience as one of their main reasons for low customer turnout (Sosriano 2012; Chi and Gursoy 2009).In spite of the growing international interest on the influence of demographic variables on behaviour in restaurants, limited research has been done on demographic variables on customer meal experience in the Kumasi Metropolis

Ideally restaurants worldwide should be able to know customers' expectations on food quality, service quality and restaurants environment. Most restaurants customers visit the outlet purposely for the experience that they go through within the restaurants. However few restaurants take the pains in trying to meet customers' expectation with regards to their meal experience in Ghana. The restaurant sector in Ghana is generally

faced with the challenge of not been able to conceptualize the meal experience of their customer in meeting their expectation.

Ghana is a good omen for restaurants, chop bars and pubs but meal experience which is one of the critical determinants of successful operation of restaurants has not attracted much attention from restaurateurs and researchers. Restaurants manages have to ensure customer's satisfaction will affect customer's perception toward restaurants success. The hospitality industries are growing in Ghana, particularly in the Kumasi metropolis. The growth of some existing ones meeting the increasing demands for individuals had been neglected. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by looking at customers' meal experience in Grade Two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti region. However according to (Ghana Tourism Authority) grade two restaurants are homogenies and have the highest number of restaurants easily accessible within the metropolis, customers were still patronizing their services despite the corona virus epidemic.
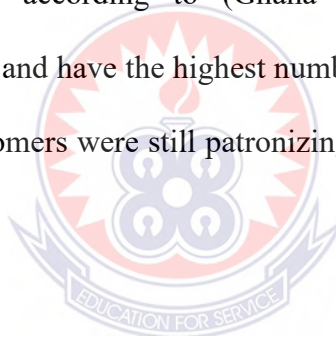
In Ghana, there has been less documented of studies on meal experience and customer satisfaction (e.g., Auty, 1992; Canny, 2014 Ismail, 2012). However, such studies focus on determinants of meal experience differently. Additionally, studies on food services sector in Ghana have focused on food service quality and food safety (Mensah, 2009). Moreover, research on food service quality, food safety and meal experience by Fraikue et al. (2013) did not focus on customer meal experience in the Kumasi metropolis. However, to help address this, it is imperative to know the influences of demographic variables on customer meal experience and the perceptions of customers and their Post-Purchase Intention Behaviour.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

General objective;

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence customers' meal experience of grade two restaurant's customers in the Kumasi metropolis.

Specific objectives;

1. To examine the relationship between demographic variables and customer meal experience.

2. To examine relationship between customer perceptions and meal experience

3. Investigate the relationship between meal experience and Post-Purchase Behavioural Intention among grade two restaurants customers in the Kumasi Metropolis.

1.4 The Research Questions

The research questions were conceptualised by considering the purpose of the study;

1. What are the factors that influence customer of meal experience in grade two restaurants in Kumasi Metropolis?

2. What are the relationship between of the demography variables and customer meal experience?

3. What are the relationship between customer perceptions and meal experience?

4. What are the relationship between customers' meal experience and the post-purchase behavioural intentions of customers in grade two restaurants in Kumasi Metropolis?

1.5 Study Hypothesis

To establish the research questions and objectives, the hypothesis was developed as follows:

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between factors that influence customer's meal experience in grade two restaurants in Kumasi.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between demographic variables and customer meal experience.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between customer perception and meal experience.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between customer meal experience and Post Purchase Behavioural Intention in grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis.
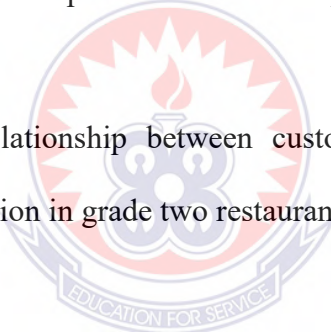
1.6 Significance of the Study

The research extends the literature on customer meal experience of grade two restaurants in Kumasi Metropolis. Through the booming of restaurant industry in recent times, operators are encountered with factors that might be delay customers to come back to their restaurant. Therefore, it is significant for restaurants operators to foster requisite knowledge and understanding on factors that really entice the customer's meal experience and Post-Purchase Behavioural Intention. Operator can design and implement marketing strategies so as to satisfy the customer expectation. Furthermore, after obtaining the necessary knowledge in comprehending their target customers,

restaurant operators will be able to gain competitive advantage to compete with their rivals in the same industry

Restaurant managers would develop a methodological tool for evaluating their meal experiences of customers in achieving their target profit. The study will review the importance of meal experiences for some managers in Kumasi Metropolis. Waiters and waitresses will know how customers measure their food quality, services quality and physical environment regarding meal experiences in restaurants.

1.7 Study Limitation

The study is wide, and as such makes it likely for other objectives to be derived from the topic; since the study is narrow to four objectives. This is obligatory to enable the researcher to conduct comprehensive study based on the designated objectives. Since the broadness of the study zone and number of restaurants working, the researcher cannot exhaust the entire statistics of the restaurants: however, the scope of the study case was limited to only ten selected grade two restaurants. For this reason, the outcome cannot be said to be entirely definitive of the situation pertaining in all the restaurants in the metropolis and the country at large. However, the findings can be used for other decision, reasoning and study basis.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study sought to assess customers' meal experience of restaurant in some grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis only.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is grouped into five chapters. Chapter one subsume the introduction which entails study background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance, limitations, delimitation and organization of the study. Chapter two seek to relate the study to other literatures reviewed by different scholars who have published their ideas on this topic. Chapter three consist of the research design, sampling techniques, population of the study, source of data and data analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will put emphases on the related literature of the research topic in order to decipher already theoretical and empirical evidence. The literature attempts to review ideals, thoughts and opinions by scholars so as to understand the customer meal experiences of restaurants, using DINESCAPE model, and SERVQUAL model. However, a theoretical framework was put up for a vivid representation of the entire research.

Restaurants are competitive market with high patronage of customers. There are several factors affecting customer meal experience in restaurant. A lot of people believed tasty and well-garnished foods are first essentials in restaurant selection. Previous works have discovered three commonly recognised strategies for determining restaurant meal experience that is the quality of food, service rendered and the restaurant's environment (Ha & Jang, 2011).

2.1 Food Quality

Food is an essential commodity of the hospitality industry particularly the restaurants; its serves as a vital part in the experience customers in the restaurant. The quality of food served at the restaurants has been widely be known to a leading factor in deciding the customers' satisfaction and post-dining behavioural intentions (Lin &Jang, 2009: Namkung & Jang, 2009: Dube et al., 1994: Sulek & Hesley, 2004). To determine the quality of food, some researchers depend on the attributes of the food. Dube et al. (1994) opinionated seven restaurant attributes which are essentials that is recurrence post-purchase intention in an unscaled restaurant layout and establish that, the quality of

13

food was much more significant to restaurant and customers than any other characteristics.

Suleket et al. (2004) explained that relative paramount of food, physical service and setting in a full-service restaurant institute that, the quality of food was the most crucial factors inducing happiness and the sole factor envisaging behavioural intention. Namkung and Jang (2007) assessed the associations of individual attributes that food quality (example physical setting, the garnishing of food, variety in menu, healthy options, and taste, temperature and food freshness) with client's pleasure and behavioural intentions.

Qin and Prybutok (2008) state that cleanliness, health option, food variety, beverages, freshness and other features of food are traits to determine the quality of food in a restaurant. Kim et al., (2009) also pointed to freshness, presentation and the taste of food as the indicators of quality food in Chinese restaurant. Since, there exist quite a number of attributes which are varied from individual customers on what constitute quality food thus there is need to look at these different facets of food quality. Nevertheless, Liu and Jang (2009) further argue that the menu variety and food safety are the two main food attributes worth investigating.

2.1.1 Food Freshness

The property of food freshness is entirely sensory which includes correct and bright colour, crisp, firm, crunchy texture, without visual defects and non-existent of off or stale flavours (Peneau, 2005). In respect with the various attributes of food, freshness is the absolute sensory component which interact with other aspects such as smell, taste

14

and sight (Delwiche, 2004). Mostly, the features such as crispness, aroma and juiciness tend to correlate with the physical state of food which denote food freshness. (Peneau et al., 2006).

Thus, the management of restaurants need to focus on the freshness of the food so as to meet the customer need by providing the required quality of food (Shaharudin et al., 2011). Freshness of food is comparatively a present phenomenon among consumers as their growing awareness of nutrition and quality is becoming more prominent which makes it paramount for the industry players in order to satisfy the client's wants and needs (Whitehall et al., 2006).

2.1.2 Food Presentation

Namkung et al. (2007) strongly believes that food presentation is an essential component which connects food quality and the taste of the customer and has a direct impact on the client's perception of quality of food. Food presentation in simple term refers to how the food is being cooked and presented to the clients. A well-presented food goes in the long run to rouse the consumer idea of quality of food (Shaharudin et al., 2011). Presentation of food is key as its help to determine the worth of the product the customer is patronising. Thus, the product may be regarded by customer as quality when its catches his or her eyes but nevertheless a food will be accepted as quality when it has a correct blending of the essentials ingredients in doing enhancing the meal experience of the customer in the restaurant.

Food presentation continues until when the client has opened the ordered food in the manner where it's visually enticing. This may lead to how the customer will eat the

15

food served. Moreover, the various visually component of the meal such as the colour, texture, garnishing of the food must be corrected put together to give really appealing food on the plate. (Zampollo et al., 2011).

Table 2.1: Some authors and their proposed food quality dimensions

No.	Authors	Proposed dimensions for quality of food
1	Grunert et al., (1996)	Appearance, convenience, health, taste, and process
2	Soriano, (2002)	Quality of service, food quality, cost and ambience of the environment.
3	Brunso et al., (2002)	Process characteristics such as organic production, natural production, animal welfare, GMO-free, etc
4	Grunert, (2005)	Sensory, health, convenience and process
5	Rijswijk and Frewer, (2008)	Taste, good product, natural/organic and freshness
6	Namkung and Jang, (2008)	Presentation, healthy options, taste, freshness and temperature.
7	Shaharudin et al., (2011)	Freshness, presentation, taste & innovative food

Source: Sharaharudin, Mansor and Elias (2011)

According to Shaharudin et al. (2011) food quality is now vital component that influence on the customer. More research has emphasised on two key food attributes which determine quality of food that is the food presentation and food freshness. Nowadays, customers are more aware f the issues that confront food quality nevertheless the issues surrounding hazards that happens in food due to additives, non-standard of cooking food and poor food choices arose lately. In addition, according to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2004), seasonings are used in packaged foods in order to preserve it and enhance its appearance and freshness. Nonetheless, customers

are currently now conscious of the health implications of these additives and are now requesting that fresh ingredients be used in cooking rather than food additives. Subsequently, Whitehall et al. (2006) stated that fresh food is comparatively becoming hard to get without the food additives as the customers are now more aware of the nutrition and quality of the food patronised. Despite this growing need among customers majority of restaurants are yet to oblige to customers' needs and wants. According to Shaharudin et al. (2011) well-garnished food can arouse the client insight of quality of food and add a good brand to the products thus initiating a great feeling of the customer towards the meal. However, it is important to research on how freshness and presentation of food affect the overall quality of food and in the long term increase a great meal experience among customers who patronise grade two restaurants in Ghana of Kumasi Metropolis.

2.2 Service Quality

Lim (2010) report that there are many varieties of restaurants available for customers to choose. These decisions most often rely on the quality service rendered at these myriads of restaurants. Customer will not haste to change for a different restaurant when they think that a restaurant has renege in its ability to provide an expected service. Therefore, a restaurant must be in motion managing its staff and ultimately their customers in order to meet the needs of its clients since customers determine the success of the establishment. Parasuraman et al. (1988) believes that customers are solely in charge determining what a quality service is. They further argue that what determine standard quality of service will vary but mostly depends on the individuals, location of the restaurant and the time of appraisal on the perceived expectation and performance. In order to evaluate subjectivity of service, Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed

17

"SERVQUAL" instrument which comprises of five service parameters: tangible, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. The tangible comprises of the visual aspect of the facility, materials and equipment and employees used to communicate to clients. Space, restaurant environment, cleanliness and location of the facility are the main component of the tangible dimension. The other dimensions such as reliability, staff aesthetic behaviours are determinants of accuracy, dependability and responsiveness.

Assurance is the intrapersonal knowledge and awareness of staffs in the restaurant and their ability to impose confidence and faith. Empathy compasses the act of offering attention and care to each of customers. Stevens et al. (1995) also established the DINESERV" instrument which is inspired by SERVQUAL instrument to evaluate what a comprehensive quality service thought by clients in restaurants. Hence, by applying the DINESERV" instrument, management of restaurants can able to comprehend the customer point of view of what quality service is entailed.

2.2.1 Service Reliability

According to Ko (2008), service reliability can be clearly evaluated not by all customers but the stable ones as this dimension tends to be more authoritative. Therefore, it is needful that restaurants staff offer their customers the promised service that is reliability whenever there are in the restaurants (Forjoe, 2011). In addition, a number of studies such as (Qin et al. 2010; Liu & Jang, 2009) have demonstrated that service reliability plays vital role in customer meal experience. This goes to benefit the restaurants as they are able to maintain dependable customer base and thus help the restaurant to boom. Furthermore, according to Qin and Prybutok (2009) managements

18

of food joints need take a closer look on how they render these services especially the reliability facet.

2.2.2 Service Responsiveness

Service responsiveness also has to do with the ability of the restaurants manage and promptly answer questions of customers (Ko, 2008). In addition, service responsiveness concerns about the time an industry take to cooperate with customers' complaints. In the perspective of a customer, service responsiveness is the communication that transpired them and the staff on issues regarding enquires about the meal served (Winsted, 1997). In the light of rendering required and quality services to customers it is needful to restaurant priorities speedy and quick responses and services. This is an encouraging factor among customers especially among the younger generation to revisit the restaurants again (Aaijaz & Ibrahim, 2011). In addition, Qin et al. (2010) postulate that due to the rapid changing of lifestyles, quite number of customers show much intentions on time of delivery of services and thus ability of restaurant to being responsive has been noted to be key factor.

2.2.3 Staff Aesthetic Behaviour

The reputation of staff in the hospitality markets particularly the restaurants is widely reported in the service sector (Cowell, 1989: Sriwongrat, 2008). Wall and Berry (2007) have observed that the behaviour or demeanour of service workers at restaurant is paramount when other parameters particularly restaurant environment is not appealing. They are also considered that the customer perception of meal experience could be linked to with the ability of employee to impress their customers. Customers are mostly looking out for the attitude of the service staff as they tend like a more courteous,

19

attentive and better knowledge of menus (Sulak & Hersby, 2004: Pratten, 2003: Sriwrongrat, 2008).

Moreover Grove et al. (2004) observed that personnel responsible for receiving customers play an essential role for forming a positive experience for the client. Gatta et al. (2009) debate that the acquisition of essential aesthetic skill would empower staff to look virtuous and sound right by seeking the happiness of the customers. They further stated that presentation of the employees such as dressing, body language, voice or/and accent and a working knowledge of culture.

2.2.4. Staffs' Skills

Due to changing environmental aspects of hospitality markets, the need for a new calibre of workers in organization has arisen. Caligiiuri et al. (2000) contend that in today markets of hospitality, management are in search to recruits individuals sociable and can work in non-indigenous environment. Grove et al. (2004) argue that managements of service sector have recognised how vital the type of employee play in the design and success of the sector. Indeed, in numerous services, customer's happiness is frequently influence by the standard interpersonal communication ensued between the client and the contract staffs as they are able to show ingenuity in problem-solving (Mason, 2002).

Current research provides solid suggestions that evidently linked restaurant concept with the success of restaurant (Parsa et al., 2005). Magnini et al. (2011) cited that, customers might opinion a foreign language restaurant as an indicator of food genuineness and they added that language is a critical tool of human.

20

Even though, there are numerous works have conducted on client's consummation in restaurant and the service quality (Brady et al., 2001; Gilbert et al., 2004; Huam et al., 2011; Qin & Prybutok, 2008,). Nevertheless, the five parameters of SERVQUAL may not be compulsory involved at the same moment as some of them appear irrelevant for the restaurant setting (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). This element is essential factor of service quality in the Ghanaian restaurants food industry, and also the responsiveness element in restaurants highlighting on speed of service (Jangga et al., 2012). Moreover, few studies which focused on these two elements. However, there is a need to categorise how the elements of meal experience that is service reliability, responsiveness, Staff Aesthetic and staffs skills have impart on post Purchase behaviour Intention among customers in restaurant.

2.3 Restaurant Environment

Customers of late are spending more eating time outside rather than their traditional homes. Due to the customer's long term experience of dining, their expectation form restaurant joints have also risen too (Raajpoot, 2002). In addition, a study conducted by Ryu et al. (2010) revealed that customers are paying attention on the restaurant environment and timely delivery of service when compared by previous years.

These recent demands from customers have encourage restaurants operator to put up modernised facility with serene environment. A number of researches also have emphasised in making restaurant environment more appealing which is vital in attracting more customers from middle- and high-class workers (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005: Wakefield & Blodgett, 2006). Furthermore, Kotler (2013) point out that environment of a food joints may be more considered by customers than the meal itself.

21

In addition, Kokko (2005) advocates that environment of an eatery is frequently thought by clients as the single most positive distinctive of the establishment than meal served. The atmospheres of restaurant will build a wonderful experience for the customers even before the meal is served. Toung et al. (2007) further mentioned that the atmosphere restaurant highlights more intangible aspect that is quality of food served and services. In the direction of customer request for refreshing eating environment, this motivates food industry to keep on advancement the restaurant environments to boost customers confident emotional state thus will lead to chosen consumer a higher willingness to visit (Xu, 2007). The attractive environment has a higher likelihood to rouse clients purchasing habit and yield more dividends (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Moreover, Chen and Hsieh, (2011) explains that are customers are more likely to spend about 12% when the environment is quite exciting and pleasure. In addition, Soriano (2002) cited that happy environment will entice clients extend their stay in the eatery.

Boker (2007) have categorised environmental factors into three groups that is design cues, ambient cues and social cues. Ambient cues denote to the setting characteristic of an eatery examples cleanliness and scent. Design cues refers to characteristics that arouse customer's alertness examples colour, decorations. Social cues refer to other customers in the environment. Table 2.2 shows the thorough information regarding the social, design and ambient cues.

Table 2.2: Components of the Physical Environment

Category	Definition	Features
Ambient factors	Background conditions that exist below the level of our immediate awareness	Air quality, temperature, humidity, circulation/ventilation, noise(level pitch), scent and cleanliness
Design factors	Stimuli that exist at the forefront of our awareness	Aesthetic Architecture, colour style, materials decoration, scale shape, texture pattern functional, layout, comfort, signage, accessories
Social factors	People in the environment	Audience (other customer) Numbers, appearance, behaviour, service personnel number, appearance, behaviour

Source: Baker (1987)

2.3.1 Authenticity Atmospherics

Authenticity is a characteristic that might be accurately pertinent to eateries. This denotes on whether the diet and setting replicate the real taste and culture of the ethnic origin. Authenticity is one of attributes of restaurant environment, which is known to contribute to client's satisfaction (Ebster & Guist, 2005; Liu & Jang, 2009). A Kotler (2013) argue that environment produces an image of the space alters their affective state, which may change or effect their purchasing behaviour. The surroundings of food joints often decorate the place with indigenous arts, music and décor to create a real and extraordinary experience among the customers (Liu &Jang, 2009). Conceptual model was used to examine the influence of the restaurant environment on each customer demeanour. This proposed model showed how the physical surrounding can determine the clients' sense of response to stimulation and pleasure which in the long run can turn the customer to either like or dislike the restaurant.

23

This model has been used in different settings (hotels and retail stores) to validate it impact on customers using empirical data (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Ryn & Jang, 2007). In the restaurant setting, Ryn and Jang (2007) discovered the synergy effect of several environmental parameters on behavioural intentions in expensive eateries. Their results braced that ambiance examples music, temperature, music and staffs outfit had the most significant effect on customer's emotional responses, which result in customer after-purchase eating behavioural intents. They appealed that the environment formed a sensitive response in individual that occasioned either approach or avoidance behaviour.

Ryn and Jang (2008) established another model called DINESCAPE. This model is use to examine customer's notions of the physical building. DINESCAPE has to do with interior eating surrounding of food joints and eliminates exterior attributes (building design, parking place) and non-dining environment (restroom and recreational area). DINESCAPE comprises of terminologies: aesthetic, illumination, ambiance, layout, dining environment and staffs.

Ryn and Jang (2008) establish that ambiance and staff's outfit had the utmost impacts on customer's emotional responses could affect clients after eating behavioural intents. Liu and Jang (2009) further used DINESCAPE tools to examine the environment of eateries and found that environment internal design, cleanliness and décor, neat, well dressed workers were suggestively linked to customer entire gratification with a food joint. Moreover, the environment features of inner design and décor and cleanliness of the surroundings were recognised to most essential in influencing customer behavioural intents.

24

2.3.2 Cleanliness

Cleanliness is a fundamental component which require a consideration in food-service industry. Food joints' sanitation has been thought as a crucial aspect when client appraises the kind of banqueting surrounding (Barber & Scarcelli, 2009: Liu et al., 2009). In today's competitive hospitality industry particularly restaurants business, it is necessary for management not to overlook the needs of consumers especially when it comes to the standard of cleanliness of the surrounding both internal and external of the restaurant facility (Steven et al., 2015).

Comprehending what clients consider, when they appraise a restaurants hygiene can enhance quality which could be cheap to get the advantageous perspectives from potential customer. (Seyng, 2012). Consequently, retorting to client preference is advantageous for cleanliness development of a specific eatery. Kroc and Anderson (2017) argue that eateries must underscore on sanitation being integral with total presence of the food joints, kitchen floor, parking lot, personnel's dressing in addition to the lavatories.

2.3.3 Ambient Scent

Ambient settings are imperceptible related features that have unconscious influence on client notions and replies to the restaurant's surrounding (Nguyen & Leblane, 2002). These imperceptible related features may include noise, lighting, scent, music, air quality, and temperature (Bitner, 1992) whereas ambient issues are not integral of main provision in food joints, their absence transpire worry to clients (Raajpoot, 2002).

Aroma is termed as an odour that emanate from any object but rather from the surrounding. Scent which is one of the five senses is regarded to linked to emotional

responses which tend disturb customer conduct. Good odour of a food joint can inspire arousal level and effect clients wish to stay. Bone and Ellen (1999) found that scent has suggestively influence a client attitude and feeling. Pleasing smell in a food joints will upshot in customer having good experience and positive perception in their cognizance.

Ryn and Jang (2007) reveals that ambiance such as odour and smell had the significant effect the client's emotional responses, which sequentially influence client eating behaviour intents. Han and Ryn (2009) avers that good smell in a food joint might result in clients being more positive about their notions and experience.

However, customers currently consider the physical environment of the food joint when they deciding where to take their meals. The two facets that will be focused in this study are sanitation and ambient odour. The main feature that effects the clients' choice is the eating section of the food joint must be unsoiled (Sienny & Serli, 2010). Clients nowadays request a cleaner food setting as eating non-toxic meal prevent or decrease foodborne diseases (Miles et al., 1999). Duberg (2010) explained that where a food joint does not make the hygiene of the facility a priority, there is bound have negative customer meal experience.

Ambient odour of a food joint is also essential subject which must be considered to appeal clients, the action can influence client purchasing conduct (Fiore et al., 2000). Ambient scent also known to be associated with the emotional responses of customers.

2.4 Price Fairness

Another key characteristic which is essential to restaurant quality is price fairness. This has strong influence on client's gratification and conduct intents (Andaleah & Conway, 2006). The notion about price fairness is repeatedly explain as whether the price is regarded by customers as sensible, acceptance and fair (Kimes & Wirtz, 2002: Kahneman et al. 1986). It is established on customer's internal locus prices, which could be generated by the past price paid the price most repeatedly paid and market prices in similar transaction. Kimes and Wirtz (2002) proposed that customers might judgement the price as unfair if it not justified by fundamental market condition. Moreover, perceived price fairness can also be enlightened by the principle of dual entitlement (Kahnerman et al., 1986).

Price has positively linked to customers satisfaction and loyalty, whereas perceived unfairness of price may lead to a negatively behavioural responses such as dissatisfaction, complaining and bad WOM. A study Kim et al. (2009) of the components of a dining experience influencing customer satisfaction and post-dining behavioural intentions in a restaurant dining facility discovered the essence of price aspects, which followed only food quality in importance.   Furthermore, words language can serve as a quality of an experience (Magniniet al., 2011).

2.5 The Customer

A customer is person who buys or patronises services or products from an establishment, for example a department, markets or a restaurant etc. Restaurant clients are frequently also known as guests. Thus, these terms have been used in interchangeably. The customers are the key stakeholders in the establishment and

27
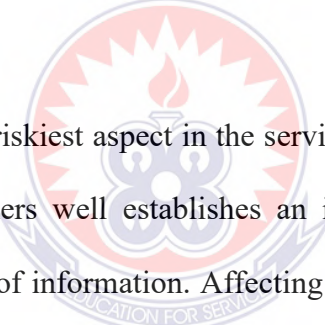
success of restaurant industry which inevitable for existences of the business without them. If there would be no business, there would be no profits. In fact, without them it is total impossible to pay the salaries of staff because the restaurant depends on money rendered for their services and products. Thus, restaurant business will suffer if they fail to render appropriate services and product to their customers. Given this reason, restaurant services are paramount aspect of the restaurant industry. What are the personalities of these customers? Customers come in many varieties such as different ethnic backgrounds, religions and all works of life.

The moments when people are starving, all they think about is to quench their hunger and subsequently when need recreation and a place to lodge when accommodation becomes the need. Yet, persons want more than great meal, cold beverages, or a relaxed room to nap. Clients also searching for where they can be at home. For instance, it is will create impression on costumers when they are noticed easily after they return to the restaurant again. The client feels great about the restaurant when they are given a great reception. In as much as the customer's feeling is more prominent than the quality of the meal served because the restaurant businesses gratify both the psychological and physical necessities of clients (Mason, 2002).

The increasing demands for quality restaurant services denote the need for restaurant operators to be cautious so as to provide nutritious treat for their customers. This is because more and more people travel outside their homes to places and request to eat from restaurants. It is therefore mandatory on the restaurateurs to provide relaxation for their clients who visit their institutions. All because providing an acceptable service quality is very significant to attract and maintain clients. In other words, the habit of

exceptional quality of service has been verified to result to upsurge of client fulfilment as observed by (Mason, 2002).

Kandampully (2018) was of view that the hospitality industry is the rapid-blooming service sector throughout the world with its attendant competition. In this progressively competitive industry, one key tenets for service organizations are to sustain a continuing relationship with their clients so as crown into long standing interest. The competitive of the restaurant industry, is absolute necessary for restaurant managements to put in appropriate strategies to enable them create brand which is unique and different from others. This plan is solely hinged on the quality delivery of the restaurant.

Ford (2000) argue that, the riskiest aspect in the service industry could be a dissatisfied customer. Handling customers well establishes an integral aspect of every business because they are dispersers of information. Affecting one customer with either good or poor service is an opened door for the news to go viral. Because both good and poor services could be likened to a force that can bring back or drive away a customer. Customers can at any time have a change of mind and alternatives for other complementary services or spread negative advertising by word-of-mouth. No wonder it is often observed the frequent shift of customers from one restaurant to the other in search for better services that will commensurate their money they pay (Power, 2006).

2.6 Concepts of Customer's Expectation and Perception

Harris (2000) believes that an individual's perception is the person's outlook which is borne out of his or her experience. No two individuals will have the same perception of

29

a particular situation making each person's perception differ from another. Perceptions of individuals do not just happen in a short time but rather a long period of years. Moreover, a number of factors will play in building one's perception such as how they were treated, values, biases etc. Inappropriately, perceptions are not essentially grounded on cogent thoughts and may be affected by transitory frustration and rage. It is vital for the service workers to be aware of client drawbacks based on their past interactions and be ready to give exceptional services. Clients may not bring every single detail of an experience, but sustain a complete sensation about it.

Harris (2000) state that one's expectations are his or her visions an upshot of his or her experiences. These can be detrimental or instrumental. Expectations are often birthed from our notions or perceptions. For instance, if client previous experience with a restaurant was negative, there is tendency that his or her next visit expectation at a different restaurant would not be positive either. Customer's expectations can be grouped into primary and secondary expectations. The basic or primary expectations are the clients' utmost fundamental desires of relation with the restaurant. For instance, when taking a meal at the restaurant, clients' prime expectations would be hygienic environment, great music and a relatively low price while secondary expectations are emanated from the clients' past experiences and which is affected by his or her primary expectations. In other words, when eating at the restaurant, customers' secondary expectations would include very decent service, politeness, quick service and tasty food. Subsequently, if customers obtained inappropriate clients service in restaurant; they will anticipate to get bad service again and thus will never return to patronise the services of the restaurant again.

According to Zeithaml et al. (1990), several factors affect expectations. They argue that what client's verbal communication of other clients can also potentially affects expectations. For instance, results from their focus-group discussions on product-repair firms show that a lot of the study participant in particular groups revealed that their expectation of best quality of services from the firm was a result of the recommendation they received from colleagues, family members and neighbours. Gitomer (1998) has also shown that more than half businesses in USA get advertisement from the customers through their recommendation to other. Thus, when he had a good experience, the client may not loudly comment on it. However, when the situation is not bad experience, they would comment on it within a few minutes of conversation.

However, Davidow and Uttal (1989) explained that customers' expectation is influenced by several intense factors which include past experience with other organisations, their advertising, psychological condition of the customer at the time-of-service delivery, personality of the client such as values and the brand of the product purchased.

Again, Zeithaml et al. (1990) indicated that customer service expectation is established on intricate considerations such as their own pre-purchase beliefs and opinions of other people. Additionally, individual needs, word of mouth communications, pre-purchase beliefs, customers' experiences and other personal behaviours all affect customers' expectation. Based on the customers' awareness of service or goods, different clients will have different expectations.

As explained by Grönroos (2004), the type of service observed by customers can be grouped into two man parameters (technical and functional parameters). The technical aspect of quality service is not enough to be understood by client. This will be influenced by the kind of service rendered. An investigation carried out by Parasuraman et al. (2015) epitomises substantial progress in explaining the quality of service and has been regarded in contrast between the expectation and what is thought as rendered. The customers and service staff share different perceptions on same service whether the services rendered was quality or not. The customers' expectation consist of a key factor influences the notion of service quality rendered. When a customer assesses the services provided whether quality or not, he does that on already established gold standard birthed from previous expectation. As noted by Lovelock and Wright (2006), the customer can judge on his or her expectations primarily from advertise, pamphlets, verbal communication among colleagues where there is no significant past experience. The standard work carried out by Zeithaml et al. (1993) creates a theoretical model which describes the style and the causes of customer expectations in relation to the rendered service. The area sandwiched between the two levels denotes a sector of open-mindedness or tolerance that the customer deems as satisfactorily received. The tolerance region is unstable capable to differ depending on the client and their conditions. As with customers, the utmost significant qualities of services have a slimmer region of tolerance. Additional essential feature also has bounds expectations near the extreme of the scale used (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). One of the prerequisites for a business to perfect the delivery of its services, and place itself effectively in relation to its opponents is to know the extent of importance attached by customers to the attributes that comprise them. This means that the perception of quality is measured by comparing the expectations and the experiences of a chain of quality attributes.

Indeed, almost all service businesses are doing the best they can to enhance their quality of service so as to get customers satisfied with their services and the restaurant business in no exemption. Operators of restaurants nowadays put greater emphasis on the quality standards so that they can satisfy the primary necessities and hopes of the clients. The moment a clients' requests are clearly recognised and acknowledged, it's then possible for eatery operators to expect and accomplish their clients' requests and wants (Juwaheer & Ross, 2003). As indicated by Choi and Chu (2001) if customers are more pleased with the service they received, it is more likely they will return.

Wipoosattaya (2001) notes that restaurants these days have enhanced their competition and therefore rather than possessing only a pleasant environment so as to attract clients and in addition, they provide excellent workers. Customer approval is the utmost concern for management due to sharp competition in restaurant industry. In addition, personalised service is the highest priority of many customers when considering a restaurant to dine in.

According to Marković (2005) benefits obtained from a high-quality services are not revealed only in how competitive the business positions itself in the hospitality industry, but more so in a bigger business dividends. The efficiency of every service organisation is arguably possible only if the demands of customers are carefully monitored and analysed and also describe and control the process and implement continuous improvements.

Service quality could be considered the life of a restaurant industry and core of service management. According to Chen (2008) as postulated by Shi and Su (2007) clients' gratification is observed to connect to kind of quality rendered service and customer satisfaction is connected with customers' intention to revisit. This suggests that, a customer's preparedness and willingness to patronize a service the second time or more times will be due to his/her interests in that service had before. For this reason, one can suggest that a good treat given to a customer could be the platform for a comeback.

With this, Ryu et al. (2008) opine that an effective image portrayed to customers, has the propensity to create competitive advantage for restaurants. This is so because customers always look for restaurant with good representation and class to associate with hence providing customers with goodness in turn enhances the image of the restaurant. A number of studies have come out with factors that impact customers and their dining experience. These factors include food quality, workers' responsiveness, variety in dishes, meal prices, atmosphere of the restaurant, waiting time, quality of service, food consistency and convenience (Sulek et al., 2004; Andaleeb et al., 2006). Liu et al. (2009) are of the view that restaurants should render client services such as efficient, reliable and authentic so as to ensure satisfaction among clients since extremely gratified clients are the highly essential resources to the business.

2.7 Post–Purchase Behavioural Intention

The term intention may be said to be a subjective opinion about how an individual will act in years to come and it frequently tend to be dependent factor in several studies in services and satisfaction model (Boulding et al., 1993). Tang and Kuo (2011) postulate that an intention of revisit refers to the intention to patronise a commodity again and behaviour which shows readiness to endorse and distribute helpful evidence for a

service provider. Soriano (2002) states that clients' decision to patronise again a particular restaurant in the future is hinged on personal's purposes. Also, Weiss (2003) states that client's intention for revisit is influence by restaurant features.

Additionally, customers' intentions of visit can be affected mostly by advertising exertions to bring back good memories and by circulated upgrades on new products (Um et al, 2006). The moments of previous visits have been observed as a key impact factors for intending to visits restaurants (Court & Lupton, 1997: Morais et al., 2001: Sampot, 1996).

Clients who get exceptional and unforgettable moments of satisfaction from a food joint always have a positive interactive intention for example endorsing the eatery to colleagues, family etc broadcast verbally encouraging words or being a faithful customer will eventually result to coming back again to the restaurant. (Bouldinget al., 1993: Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). In addition, staffs who treat clients with special care and respect tend to obviously influence on their decisions of subsequent visits as they are made to feel exceptional (Kim & Moon, 2009: Jang & Namkung, 2009).

Pullman and Gross (2004) explain that customer's affective response remains as a significant mediator role. They further argue that the better the promptness of services staff to the needs of customer, the greater the chance of the customer coming back again.

Generally, existing old clients are much more lucrative than getting a fresh clients. To guarantee that clients will might come back again to the eatery, maintain clients will be

vital plan to adopt by operators of food joints as it involves a much higher efforts to bring a fresh clients than to maintain a regular client (Fornell, 1992). As shown from the work of Chaudhry (2007), existing customers provide approximately double of gross revenue when compared to a fresh client. Nonetheless, gaining a fresh client will charge between about seven times more than to retain regular customers (Conkling, 2006). According to Kivela et al. (1999), five main attributes within a restaurant determine customer retention rate. These include quality of food, quality of the environment, quality of service, initial and latter impression in addition to rate of comfort of the eatery. It is thus imperative for the restaurant operator to detect the tenets that is a precursor of good attitudes amongst clients and affect the customer's intentions. Again, it is important to emphasise that issues that influence customers' gratification might not necessarily entice him or her for coming back again. For instance, Namkung and Jang (2009) have argued that satisfaction of clients has a strong positive correlation with the temperature of food served but no substantial impact on the customer intent of re-visit. In contrast, Lim (2010) argue that the intent of customers to re-visit a restaurant again is strongly tied to healthy ingredients but does not affect satisfaction of customers. In order to reduce customers' needs and wants, it is crucial that restaurant operator's emphasis on the influence of feature that affect client gratification and re-patronage of restaurants. Researchers most of the time explain customer loyalty to mean not only repeated buying, but also the clients' attitude of intention to repurchases or patronize again. As a result, re-patronise intent become a crucial aspect of such behavioural concepts (Evanschitzky et al., 2006).

With regards to behavioural buying, it is often linked with real clients eating behaviour which includes the measurement of previous purchase hinged on former buying

behaviour (Ehrenberg, 1988). Fournier (1998) however, opines that attitudinal intention is the psychological nature of the clients toward the same organization which is connected with the client's approving conduct.

Clearly, both attitudinal and behavioural loyalties are significant in developing lasting client relations. As both ideas helps in appreciating client previous conducts and also suitable forecasting intentions of clients visits (Kumar & Shah, 2004).

2.8 Appraisal of Pertinent Theoretical Model

Figure 2.1 Effect of Institutional DINESERV on Client Gratification, Return Intention, and Verbal communication
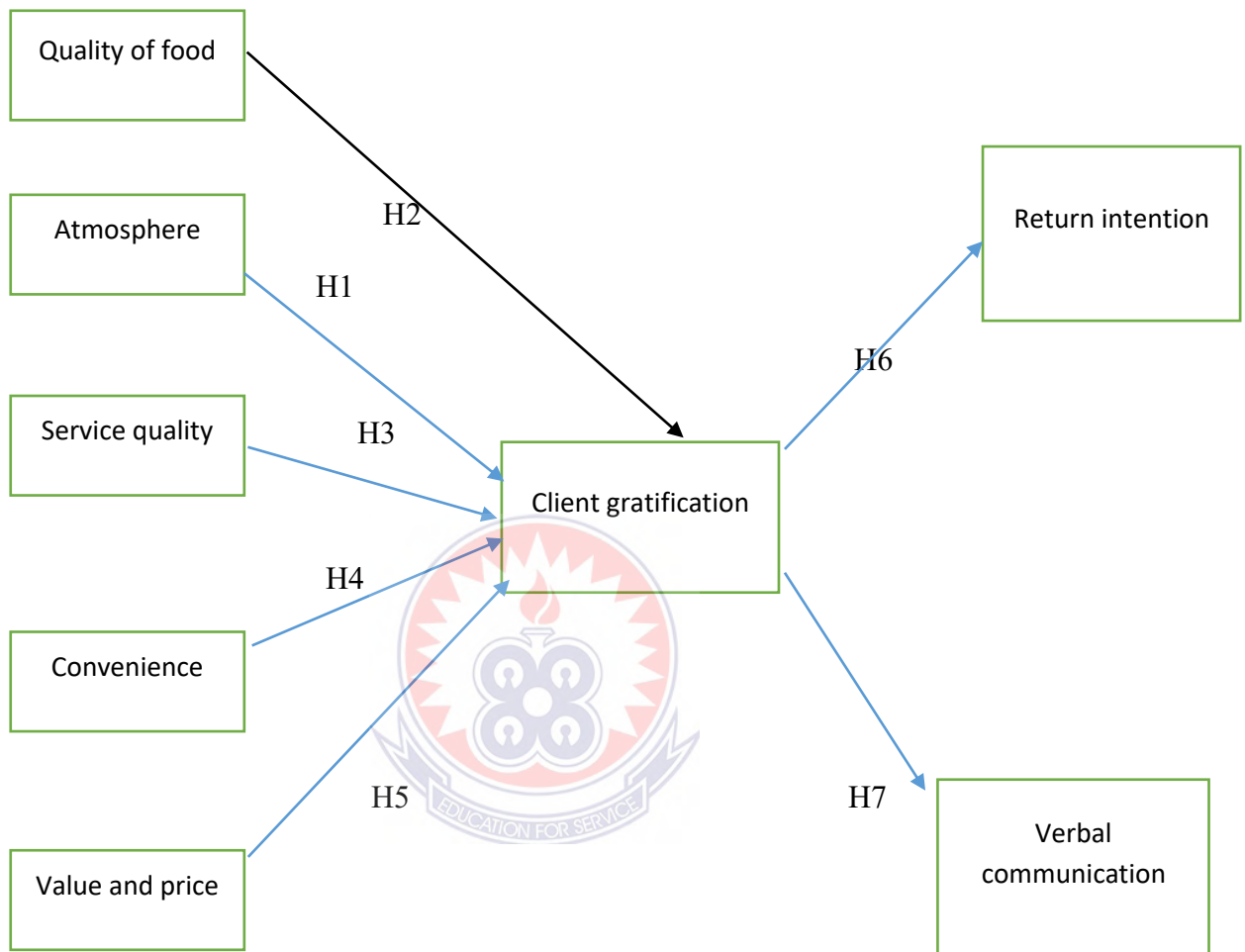
Figure 2.1: The Institutional DINSERV Model

Figure 2.1 postulates the conceptual context that explores the comparative significance of institutional DINESERV aspects such quality of meal, quality service, convenience, atmosphere and value and price that influence client gratification in the tertiary institutions' eating amenities in America. Also, this framework was adopted to study the effect of client gratification on the intent of coming back and verbal communication appraisal. The results of the study revealed that all operational DINESERV parameter

38

exhibited a substantial good relation towards client intent of re-visit. The higher the client gratification, the higher chances of customers returning to the food joints. This also tend lead to customers recommending the services of the restaurant to others. This research tools is pivotal in upgrading the efficiency of operations services of various type of food joints. Furthermore, this tool has the potency of assisting restaurant managements to understand clients' after purchase conducts which will increase customer eating experience.

2.9 Propose Conceptual Framework
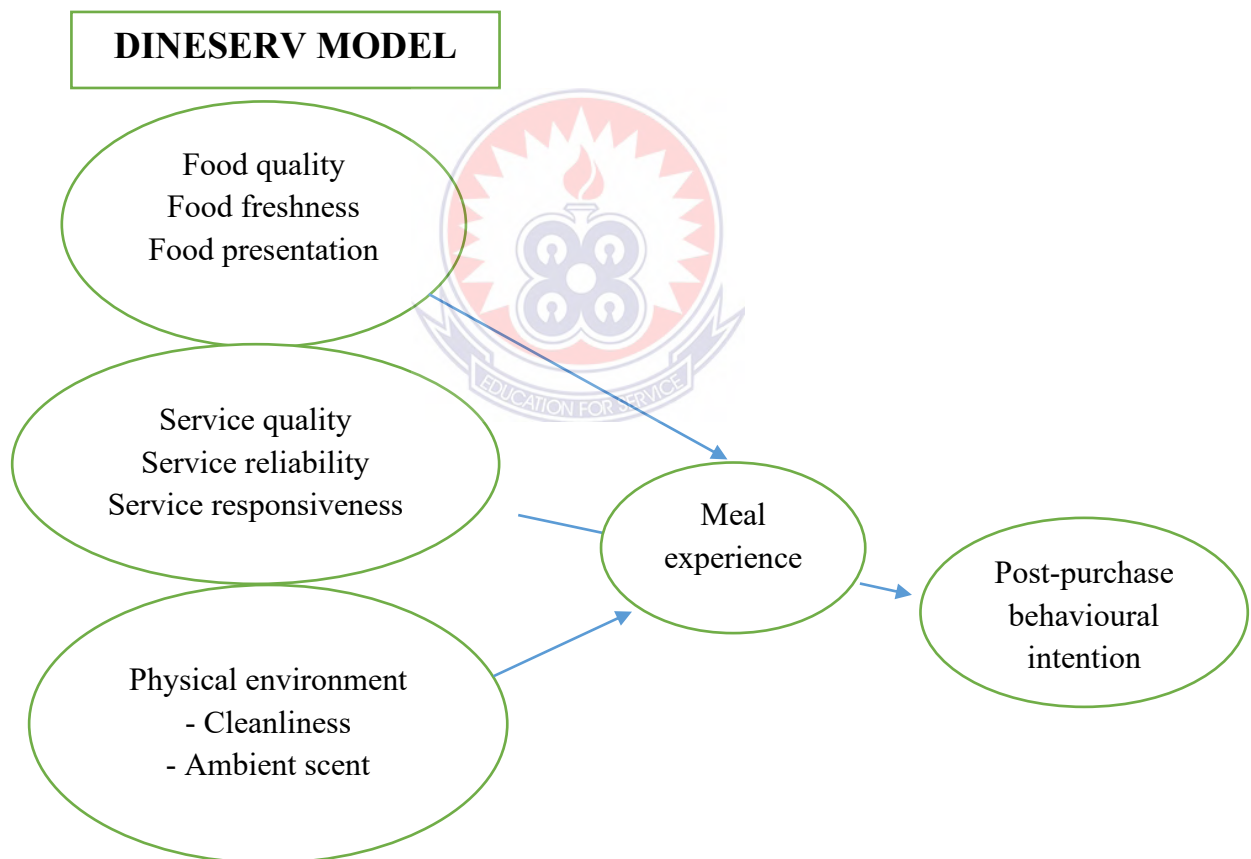
Figure 2.2: Customer meal experience of selected restaurant

There are number of research works which share the view that quality of food, quality of service and food joints surrounding influences client meal experience. Additionally,

39

the work of Yeoh, (2008) revealed that the fast food joints managers are also challenged as they are unable to receive the requisite clients' suggestions and comments on the meal experience. Thus, this current study is aimed at understanding how factors that influence customers meal experience, perception and post-purchase behavioural intent in restaurants which are grade two in Kumasi Metropolis.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature on the current study. In general, the review focused on the concepts of meal experience and customer service, perception and expectation. The reviewed literature broadly shows that meal experience among customers of restaurant is influenced by several factors and considerations. Food freshness, presentation of food, food taste, temperature of food and quality of service significantly influence customer satisfaction and hence, their meal experience. In addition, the restaurant environment (i.e., atmosphere at the restaurant, extent of cleanliness, scent, decorations, among others) play important role in stimulating customers' purchasing habit which enhances their meal experience.

The literature reviews further sheds light on the fact that operations of restaurants are complex and that couple with the complications of the expectations of customers makes the predictability of customers' meal experience quite challenging. These notwithstanding, there exists gaps in the literature particularly in the Ghanaian context since majority of studies in the extant research works largely emphasised quality of food service as well as food safety. It is thus imperative to find out what constitutes meal experience and how that can help to improve customer satisfaction at restaurants, hence this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study essentially brings to light the specific methods and techniques employed in undertaking this research. The entire chapter details out the means through which these methods are used and how they contribute effectively to help achieve the objectives of the study. Among other things, the chapter provides in-depth information with regards to the research design, population of the study, sources of data, sample and sampling techniques which are employed in carrying out this research.

3.2 Research Design

Research design as explained by Kerlinger and Lee (2000) is a plan, structure and strategy of the investigating responses to research questions or problems. In this study, quantitative research was found to be the most suitable method with the feasibility of the research in mind. The quantitative method is cost effective and fast to implement. This according to Babbie (2005) opens up the possibility of statistical analyses ranging from simple statistics to complex mathematical models and formulas.

It is important to highlight that the basic objective of conducting a quantitative research study is to establish the relationship between a dependent variable and other independent variable(s) in a population. Quantitative research design further allows research participants to actively participate in the research at a time that is suitable to them. Therefore, being able to collect information quickly without any geographic constraints together with the limited resource on hand are some of the factors that contributed to influencing the researcher's choice of quantitative research method over

the other research designs. A quantitative approach meant that the results were unbiased and relevant to the circumstances under which the research was carried out.

3.3 Sources of Data

This study essentially depended on primary data which happen to be data collected directly by the researcher for the first time. Primary data in this study were obtained from the fieldwork through the administration of questionnaires as well as oral interviews. Questionnaires were administered and oral interviews held with customers, employees and operators of some selected grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis.

3.4 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is considered proper techniques for measuring participant views and attitudes (Johnson & Owen, 2003: Denscombe, 2010). A closed ended question was used in the form of Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree SA, Agree A, Normal N, Strongly disagree SD Agree, Excellent E, Good G, Fair F, Uncertain U, Poor P. The questionnaire will be used to solicit data based on the research questions so as to achieve the objectives. The researcher also kept back the questions dumpy and easy to comprehend and avoided asking confusing question.

Moreover the use of the questionnaire permits privacy to the respondents and is often easier to scrutinise. Saris and Gallhofer (2007) argue that the questionnaire helps to construct relatively simple questions that can also be applied to all respondents. It is therefore important consideration that, more structured the questionnaire is the easier it is to match results at a later stage and that dumpy questions are upright question

42

(Powell & Conway, 2009). However, questionnaire will be used as tools to gather the data and information from respondents and each one of the question in the questionnaire was adopted from different journals.

3.5 Study Population

Population in this context refers to the target group on which a researcher hope to obtain information so as to draw conclusion. The population for the study consisted of one thousand three hundred and fifty (1350) customers from ten grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis who patronized the service from the restaurant. However, it will be necessary to give a broader scope for the sample size to be selected so that proper generalization could be representative of the population (Cohen, 1988).

3.6 Sample Size

The sample size was calculated by the total population, time and margin of error. The sample size is a fair representation of the population for the study. The researcher used one of the formula proposed by cotton (1988) to estimate the sample size for this study. This sample size formula is given as n = *Z²p (1-p)/d²*

From the formula above,

n is the proposed sample size,

Z is the margin of error (usually set at 1.96),

p is the standard deviation and

d is the confidence level.

With an estimated population of about one thousand three hundred and fifty (1350), the above formula gives a sample size of approximately three hundred (300) for this study.

These 300 individuals are mainly made up of clients or customers of the selected restaurants.

Source: field data 2020

3.7 Sampling Technique

A sample technique refers to a method that a researcher will adopt to select element from population. According to Zikmund et el. (2010) there are two categories of sample techniques namely probability and non-probability. The researcher adopt non-probability sampling technique. In this study, the researcher employed through sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used for grade two restaurants while the convenience sampling technique was used to select customers who patronize these restaurants
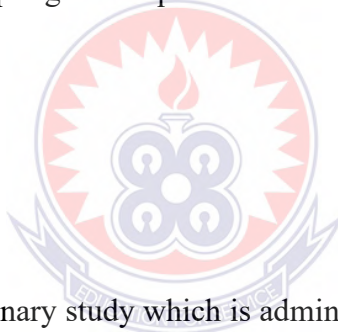
3.8 Pilot Test

A pilot test is a small preminary study which is administered to test a proposed research study, to evaluate its feasibility, duration, cost and effect in order to improve upon a research project. The primary purpose of a pilot test is to evaluate the feasibility of the research project.

A pilot study on twenty customers of some of the selected grade two restaurant was administered. Furthermore the pilot study helped to identify the accuracy of Likert scale adopted to determine its relevance with the objectives the researcher intends to achieve as far as the topic was concerned.

3.9 Data Collection

According to Ghana Tourism Authority (2013) Kumasi Metropolis has twenty (20) grade two restaurants operating in the food service industry. The study basically

collected primary data from two hundred and eighty-two customers at top ten (10) grade two restaurants. These ten (10) restaurants were part of the twenty grade two restaurants in the Kumasi metropolis where the questionnaire was admitted.

The research questionnaire were divided into various sections. These sections included that of respondent's demographic variables factors that influence, customer meal experience and, post-purchase behavioural intentions.

The questionnaire was designed to ensure that accurate answers on the main components of customer meal experience were obtained. The wording of the questionnaire was made to be as simple as possible requesting only straightforward answers. Furthermore, due to the limited time of the respondents, they were made to tick responses that were in agreement with the questions asked in order to guarantee rapid gathering of data.
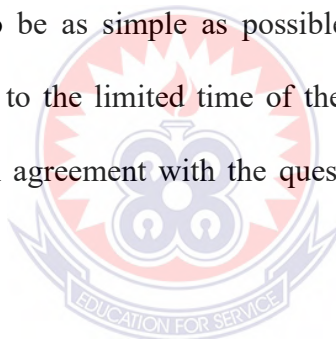
3.10 Scale Measurement

In this study, a five point Likert Scale was adopted to facilitate inferential statistical analysis. Categorical statements were also included. The use of the Likert scale was to make it possible to measure respondents' judgements on the critical issues of concern for this research which could not be assigned categorical answers. It is important to mention that Likert scale has been widely applied in a lot of related research works in this field.

3.11 Reliability Test

The purpose of a reliability was mainly to determine or for that matter measure the internal consistency and accuracy of scale adopted and also to determine the accuracy

of responses received after data collection. Reliability which is measured using Cronbach's alpha can be written in a formula as:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N-1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

Beyond the internal consistency, Burns and Grove (2003) are of the view that external validity is the degree to which the outcomes of a research or a survey could be replicated and generalized on a broader scale and for that matter by people or institutions outside the case study.

3.12 Data Analysis

Data collected from the customers of the selected restaurants were cleaned, rearranged and statistically grouped and entered in to SPSS Version 21. The researcher after data entry performed basic descriptive analysis such as frequency distribution and percentages on the responses obtained. The descriptive responses were presented in graphs and table. In addition, appropriate inferential statistical methods were employed to test the research hypothesis. Furthermore, Pearson Correlation coefficients were estimated to establish the direction and magnitude of the linear relationship among the variables.

3.12.1 Regression Analysis

In order to determine the impact of the independent variables over the dependent variables

The regression model estimated in this study takes the following form:

Meal Experience = β_0 + β_1(Service Quality) + β_2(Food Quality) + β_3(Restaurant Environment)

Source; Field data 2020

The betas ($\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$) show the marginal impact of a change in the independent variables (that is, service quality, food quality and restaurant environment) on the dependent variable (Meal experience). That is, if the independent variables should change by 1-unit, the dependent variable will change by the values of the betas (i.e. $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$).

4.1.2 Age of Study's Participants

Table 4.1 presents five categories of ages among the study participants. The age ranges for the respondents is 18 - 60 years. Greater proportions of the study participants were young which comprises about 282 (46.8 %) of participants. This is preceded by participants who are aged between 26 - 33 years old with about 28.7 % 81 respondents. The participants who were between 34 - 41 years 38(13.5%). Next participants who are aged from 42 - 49 years were 14 (5.0 %) of participants. Study participants with ages from 50 years and above were also 17 (6.0 %).

The age distribution of the participants is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Age of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 – 25 years	132	46.8
26 – 33 years	81	28.7
34 – 41 years	38	13.5
42 – 49 years	14	5.0
50 years and above	17	6.0
Total	**282**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 4.3: Monthly Income of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
GH¢1000 –GH¢3000	117	41.5
GH¢3000 – GH¢5000	71	25.2
GH¢5000 – GH¢10,000	94	33.3
Total	**282**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2020

From the table, it can be observed that majority of the respondents, representing 41.5% had an income level of GH¢1000-GH¢3000 whilst just as few as 25.2% of the respondents had an income level of GH¢3000 – GH¢5000. The remaining 33.3% of the respondents were the highest earners, earning GH¢5000 – GH¢10,000 per month.

Table 4.4: Relationship between Demographic variables and Meal Service

Background characteristics/Overall meal experience	Overall Meal Service					Correlation Coefficient	
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total	Pearson	Spearman
Gender							
Male	8	15	92	40	155		
Female	6	19	75	27	127	–0.060	–0.070
Total	14	34	167	67	282	(0.032)	(0.024)
Age							
18 – 25 years	6	14	76	36	132		
26 – 33 years	7	8	54	12	81		
34 – 41 years	0	7	20	11	38	–0.019	–0.047
42 – 49 years	0	2	8	4	14	(0.075)	(0.043)
50 years & above	1	3	9	4	17		
Total	14	34	167	67	282		
Occupational Status							
Employed	8	14	86	34	142		
Self-employed	6	20	81	33	140	– 0.014	–0.022
Total	14	34	167	67	282	(0.081)	(0.071)
Marital Status							
Single	9	17	84	35	145		
Married	4	13	69	26	112	0.016	0.007
Divorced	1	4	14	6	25	(0.080)	(0.091)
Total	14	34	167	67	282		
Monthly Income							
GH¢1000 –GH¢3000	7	13	71	26	117		
GH¢3000 – GH¢5000	4	6	42	19	71	0.013	0.004
GH¢5000 – GH¢10,000	3	15	54	22	94	(0.084)	(0.124)
Total	14	34	167	67	282		

Source: Field Data, 2020;   Values in (   ) are *p*-values

It is important to emphasise that the socio-demographic characteristics exhibited by customers to some extent relate to meal experience. Such customer attributes as age, gender, income levels, marital status, among others strongly affects the way customers behave which to a very large extent affects the experience they obtain at the restaurant. The results as shown in Table 4.4 shows that there is no relationship between gender and customer experience. The Pearson's and Spearman correlation coefficients reported between gender and meal experience were –0.019 and –0.047 respectively. The results vindicate the findings of Mohsin (2005) and Kotler and Keller (2006) who found that

customers of different genders rated their experiences of service significantly differently (p<0.05). The reason for the significant differences might be attributed to the fact that some personality specialties combined with masculinity and femininity account for the diversification among the behaviour of male and female customers (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2001).

Also, values of both the Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient showed that there is a negative association between age of respondents and meal experience. The results is in line with previous studies that found experiences of food and beverage, service and overall experiences to vary according to income (Auty, 1992; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2002b). Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002) also noted that customers from different monthly income groups rated their overall experiences significantly different in formal full-service restaurants. In their study on formal full-service restaurants, Liu and Jang (2009) and Bowie and Buttle (2006) also found a significant difference in overall experiences of customers from different monthly income groups. Customers with high levels of income tend to expect high levels of quality, comfort, prestige and personalised service, hence there tends to be a significant difference in overall experiences of customers from different monthly income groups (Liu & Jang, 2009).

Occupational status of respondents was found to have a negative relationship with meal experience. Furthermore, the results shown in Table 4.4 indicate that there is a positive relationship between marital status and meal experience.

It is evident from Table 4.4 that the experiences of customers' meal service were not influenced by their gender, age, and monthly income. The only demographic variable that did influence customers' experiences was marital status.

Table 4.5: Customers' Perception about Price of Products

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Food	49	17.4
Service	58	20.6
Atmosphere	36	12.8
None	139	49.3

The results as presented in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.5 depicts greater proportions of customers of restaurants perceive prices of restaurant products to be moderate. These categories of respondents were 181 representing 64.2%.

Table 4.6: Perception about Price of Service

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	72	25.5
Moderate	181	64.2
Low	29	10.3
Total	**282**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2020

The results also showed that 72 customers constituting 25.5% recognise the prices of products offered by restaurants to be high while the remaining 29 respondents believe the prices of restaurant products are low.

4.2 Customers' Meal Experience

The task here was to find out from customers the extent of their dining experience at the respective grade two restaurants they visited. The results as well as the analyses and discussions have been presented in table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Customers' Meal Experience

	N	Mean	Standard Dev.	Chi-Square	Degree of Freedom	Sig. Value
Food Impression						
Attractiveness of Presentation	282	3.45	1.44	16.264	3	0.000
Taste of food	282	4.45	0.66	27.133	3	0.006
Temperature of food	282	4.09	0.71	23.205	2	0.000
Variety of menu items	282	4.27	0.68	21.864	2	0.000
Nutrition of food	282	3.55	1.08	13.518	3	0.000
Smell of food	282	4.00	0.74	21.481	4	0.000
Sufficiency of food	282	3.36	1.07	17.476	3	0.002
Customer Service						
Friendly, polite & helpful staff	282	4.84	0.78	28.722	3	0.000
Attentiveness of staff	282	4.27	1.04	31.432	3	0.000
Efficient Service	282	3.82	1.42	12.136	2	0.010
Staff knowledge of food & beverages	282	4.09	1.00	20.507	3	0.000
Staff greeting guests	282	4.45	0.66	24.027	2	0.00
Sympathetic handling of complaints	282	2.18	1.48	16.338	3	1.042
Willingness to help	282	3.91	1.50	22.755	3	0.000
Prompt & quick response	282	4.32	0.86	21.828	3	0.001
Restaurant Environment						
Restaurant attractive interior design and decor	282	3.81	1.42	19.471	2	0.000
Ventilation of the room	282	3.45	1.37	16.255	3	0.003
Table setting, crockery & cutlery	282	4.73	1.04	24.634	3	0.000
Cleanliness of dining areas	282	4.36	0.81	25.963	4	0.000
General excitement in terms of music	282	4.17	1.12	19.007	3	0.000
Pleasant smell of environment	282	3.84	1.31	21.518	4	0.000

Table 4.8: Relative Importance Index: Customers' Meal Experience

	N	Mean	Sum	RII	Ranking
Food Impression					
Taste of food	282	4.45	132	83	1
Variety of menu	282	4.27	129	82	2
Temperature of food	282	4.09	127	79	3
Smell of food	282	4.00	126	79	4
Nutrition of food	282	3.55	122	76	5
Attractiveness of Presentation	282	3.45	120	73	6
Sufficiency of food	282	3.36	114	72	7
Customer Service					
Friendly, polite & helpful staff	282	4.84	133	88	1
Staff greeting guests	282	4.45	130	86	2
Prompt & quick response	282	4.32	129	85	3
Attentiveness of staff	282	4.27	129	82	4
Staff knowledge of food & beverages	282	4.09	126	82	5
Staff willingness to help	282	3.91	124	78	6
Efficient Service	282	3.82	120	77	7
Sympathetic handling of complaints	282	2.18	114	75	8
Restaurant Environment					
Table setting, crockery & cutlery	282	4.73	142	84	1
Cleanliness of dining areas	282	4.36	137	82	2
General excitement in terms of music	282	4.17	134	81	3
Pleasant smell of environment	282	3.84	131	80	4
Restaurant attractive interior design and décor	282	3.81	130	77	5
Ventilation of the room	282	3.45	126	76	6

Source: Field Data, 2020

In Table 4.8, the study took a lot at the key elements that define customers' perception on meal experience. Customers' meal experience has three main components namely, quality of food, customer service and quality of the restaurant environment. The first part of the table looks at customers' perception on food quality. Customers were asked several questions relating to quality of food. The results showed that mean values of the variables were relatively high which indicated that customers were satisfied with the taste of food, variety of menu, temperature of food, smell of food, smell of food, among others. Thus, customers' perception on food quality was good. The estimated Chi-square statistics were relatively high suggesting a high level of significance of these variables. The results of the Relative Importance Index (RII) as presented in Table 4.8 indicate that the variables were highly significant with the indexes ranging from 72 – 83. Taste of food was ranked first with relative importance index of 83.It is followed by variety of menu with RII of 82. The remaining variables used to measure food quality perceived by customers to influence meal experience include temperature of food, smell of food, nutrition of food, attractiveness of presentation as well as sufficiency of food.

The second part of the table considers customers' perception about the service they received at the respective restaurants. With the exception of sympathetic handling of complaints, the rest of the variables have relatively high mean values suggesting that customers were satisfied with the services they were offered. That is to say that customers perceive friendliness and politeness of staff, attentiveness of staff, staff greeting guests, staff knowledge of food & beverages, willingness to help, among other factors at the restaurants they patronised to be good. Once again, the Chi-square statistics for variables measuring customer services were statistically significant except sympathetic handling of complaints. From the results presented in Table 4.8,

friendliness and politeness of staff was ranked first with a relative importance index of 88 followed by staff greeting guests, prompt & quick response, attentiveness of staff, staff knowledge of food & beverages and staff willingness to help with 86, 85, 82, 82 and 78 which were ranked second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth respectively.

The third and last part of Table 4.8 focuses on the restaurant environment. As the table depicts, factors pertinent to restaurant environment which influence customer meal experience which had mean value of greater than 3 include table setting, crockery & cutlery, cleanliness of dining areas, pleasant smell of environment, among others. The Chi-square statistics as presented in Table 4.8 show that all the factors were significant. Table setting, crockery & cutlery, cleanliness of dining areas, general excitement in terms of music, pleasant smell of environment, restaurant attractive interior design and decor and ventilation of the room were ranked first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth with relative importance index of 84, 82, 81, 80, 77 and 76 respectively as shown in Table 4.8.

To further support the above analysis, customers were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceive their meal experience. The results have been presented in Table 4.9 below. The results clearly shows that majority of the customers interviewed indicated that their meal experience was good.

Table 4.9: Customers' Perception about Meal Experience

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	14	5.0
Fair	34	12.1
Good	167	59.2
Excellent	67	23.7
Total	**282**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 4.10: Reliability Test

No.	Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	Meal Experience	0.723	5
2	Food Impression	0.700	6
3	Customer Service	0.791	7
4	Restaurant Environment	0.778	6
5	Food Quality	0.800	11
6	Service Quality	0.776	7
7	Quality of Restaurant Environment	0.717	6
8	Post-purchase Behavioural intention	0.856	6

Source: Field Data, 2020

The results from Table 4.10 clearly reveals that all constructs were higher than 0.6. As can be seen in the table, post-purchase behavioural intention has the highest alpha coefficient of 0.856. It was measured by 6 items. The construct with the next highest alpha coefficient is food quality. Its Cronbach's alpha is 0.800 and it was measured by 11 items. It was followed by customer service and it was measured by 7 items with alpha coefficient of 0.791. Restaurant environment which has the next highest Cronbach's alpha of 0.778 was measured by 6 items. Service quality was measured by 7 items and showed an alpha coefficient of 0.776. Meal experience has an alpha

coefficient of 0.723 and it was measured by 5 items. Quality of restaurant environment was measured by 6 items and produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.717. Lastly, measured by 6 items, food impression produced the lowest alpha coefficient of 0.700.

Table 4.11: Aspect of Meal Experience

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Food	49	17.4
Service	58	20.6
Atmosphere	36	12.8
None	139	49.3
Total	**282**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2020

The statistics in table 4.11 shows that 49.3% or 139 respondents were not disappointed with the aspect of the meal experience. While 58 or 20.6% respondents were disappointed so far as service is concerned with the meal aspect, another aspect of meal disappointment was food which represent 49 or 17.4% respondents. Lastly 36 or 12.8% respondents were disappointed about atmosphere of the restaurants.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

In order to determine the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables and also between the independent variables themselves, the Pearson correlation coefficients among the variables were estimated.

Table 4.12 below illustrates the results of the estimated Pearson correlation coefficients.

Table 4.12: Results of Estimated Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Meal Experience	Service Quality	Food Quality	Restaurant Environ	Post-Purch. Behav. Intention	Customer Service
Meal Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.493**	0.462**	0.536**	0.424**	0.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00
	N	282	282	282	282	282	282
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation		1	0.540**	0.613**	0.481**	0.665**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N		282	282	282	282	282
Food Quality	Pearson Correlation			1	0.478**	0.623**	0.525**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.000	0.000	0.000
	N			282	282	282	282
Restaurant Environment	Pearson Correlation				1	0.504**	0.473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					0.000	0.000
	N				282	282	282
Post-purchase Behavioural intention	Pearson Correlation					1	0.536**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.		0.000
	N					282	282
Customer Service	Pearson Correlation						1
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N						282

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field Data, 2020

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficients as presented in Table 4.12 shows that the correlation among all the variables is significant at 0.01 levels, two- tailed. In addition, the results also show that there are positive relationships between all independent variables and the dependent variable.

The results indicate that there is a positive correlation between meal experience and service quality. The reported correlation coefficient between them is 0.493. A positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.462 was reported between meal experience and food quality. In addition, there exists a positive correlation between meal experience and restaurant environment. A correlation coefficient of 0.536 was estimated between these two variables. There is also a positive relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention. They have a correlation coefficient of 0.424. Again, meal experience and customer service have positive relationship with a coefficient of 0.397. Furthermore, a positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.540 between service quality and food quality was recorded. Food quality and post-purchase behavioural intention have a positive relationship and their estimated correlation coefficient is 0.623. Finally, service quality and customer service are positively correlated with a correlation coefficient of 0.665.

4.7 Regression Analysis

Having established the existence of relationships among the variables, we estimate the regression model formulated in the previous chapter. This section thus involves the estimation of the regression model to measure the marginal influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The task here is to establish whether meal experience in grade two restaurants in Kumasi is influenced by food quality as well as service quality and the restaurant environment.

Table 4.13: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.584[a]	0.341	0.238	0.46034

a. *Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality, Food Quality and Restaurant Environment*

An important statistic that would be considered here is the R Square which measures the percentage or proportion of changes in a dependent variable explained by changes in an independent variable(s). It ranges between 0 – 1 with low R Square value indicating that the independent variable(s) is (are) not explaining much of the changes in the dependent variable. As can be seen from Table 4.13, the R Square for the regression model is 0.341. This means that approximately 34.1% of the changes in the dependent variable (meal experience) was influenced by the three explanatory variables, namely, service quality, food quality and restaurant environment. The remaining 65.9% of the changes in meal experience was accounted for variables or factors captured in the stochastic term. Low R square value indicates that the model does not fit the data well. The smaller R Square value recorded in this study is not surprising as it is common in many cross-section studies.

Table 4.14: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	27.468	3	9.145	45.049	0.000[b]
Residual	56.534	278	0.203		
Total	84.002	281			

a. Dependent Variable: Meal Experience

b. Predictors: (Constant), Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment

The coefficients of the regression equation as shown in Table 4.15 below reveals that all three explanatory variables have positive and statistically significant relationship with customer meal experience.

Table 4.15: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.728	0.523		3.304	0.000
Service Quality	0.470	0.086	0.393	5.465	0.000
Food Quality	0.665	0.134	0.742	4.963	0.000
Restaurant Environment	0.216	0.071	0.207	3.042	0.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Meal Experience*

From Table 4.15, the following specific regression equation can be formulated:

Meal Experience = 1.728 + 0.470 (Service Quality) + 0.665 (Food Quality) + 0.216 (Restaurant Environment)

From the equation above, the coefficient of service quality is positive and significant at less than 1 percent level of significance. The coefficient of service quality was 0.470 which means that the level of customer meal experience will increase by 0.470 units when service quality increases by 1 unit. The results obtained here is consistent with the theoretical expectations of the role of service quality in promoting customer meal experience. It further suggests that restaurants which fail to provide quality services to their customers are likely to lose them. The positive and significant impact of service quality on customer meal experience obtained in this study is supported by earlier

studies or researches like Haghighi *et al.* (2012), Liu and Jang (2009), Lim (2008), Iglesias *et al.* as well as (2004).

The coefficient of food quality was 0.665 and it was also positive and statistically significant at less than 1 percent significance level. A coefficient of 0.665 implies that level of customer meal experience will increase by 0.665 units when food quality increases by 1 units. Among all three explanatory variables, food quality exerts the strongest influence on customer meal experience. Indeed, this result is not surprising since food forms the core product of every restaurant and such plays a pivotal role in the restaurant business. As opined by Lin &Jang (2009) and Namkung & Jang (2009), quality of food has come to be widely recognized as a key aspect impacting client meal experience and after-meal behavioural intentions.

Lastly, restaurant environment which had a coefficient of 0.216 was not only positive but also statistically significant at less than 1 percent level of significance. Thus, when the quality of restaurant environment increases by 1 unit, the level of customer meal experience increases by approximately 0.216 units. This result is in line with the theoretical expectation of the fact that surrounding of a food joint can be paramount as the food itself. It is without doubt that the surroundings of a restaurant will certainly build and create an anticipation of meal experience even before the client is served. Hence, an improved of restaurants environment will likely attract more customers and thereby enhancing their meal experience. Earlier studies by Tlorng *et al.* (2013), Chen and Hsieh (2011), Ryu e*t al.* (2010), Reimer & Kuehn (2005) and Kokko (2005) all found positive impact of restaurant environment on customer's meal experience which is similar to the one obtained in this study.

4.8 Meal Experience and Post-purchase Behavioural Intention

It is indeed an undeniable fact that the restaurant industry is one of the keenly competitive sectors in every economy. While traditional eating places like chop bars create competition for restaurants, it is important to also recognize the significant competition among restaurants themselves. Thus, when people become more satisfied with meal experience, they are expected to embrace positive post-purchasing behavioural intention by visiting same restaurants in the future or recommend them to other customers. This study therefore sought to find out the possible relationship that meal experience has with customers' intention to visit the restaurants again in the future or refer other customers to such restaurants. To this end, a cross-tabulation analysis was carried out to examine possible relationship between customers' meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention among customers of the selected grade two restaurants.

Table 4.16: Customers' Post-Purchase Behavioural Intentions

Post-purchase Behavioural intention	Agreed	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Intention to Revisit same restaurant	218(77.3%)	47(16.7%)	17(6.0%)	**282**
Intention to recommend restaurant to others	224(79.4%)	43(15.3%)	15(5.3%)	**282**
Other intentions	118(41.8%)	127(45.0%)	37(13.2%)	**282**

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 4.17: Customers' meal experience and Post-Purchase Behavioural Intention

Meal Experience	Post-Purchase Behavioural Intention			χ^2 p-value
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	
Intention to revisit restaurant				
Poor	0.0	100.00	0.0	
Fair	62.4	21.2	16.4	$\chi^2 = 47.28$
Good	78.7	9.4	11.9	$p = 0.000$
Excellent	91.6	0.0	8.4	$df = 14$
Intention to recommend restaurant to others				
Poor	0.0	0.0	100.0	$\chi^2 = 41.32$
Fair	63.3	12.1	24.6	$p = 0.000$
Good	84.8	5.4	9.8	$df = 14$
Excellent	92.4	2.1	5.5	
Other intentions				
Poor	95.2	0.0	4.8	$\chi^2 = 2.63$
Fair	47.0	20.4	32.6	$p = 0.247$
Good	38.7	33.1	28.2	$df = 14$
Excellent	21.3	41.3	37.4	

Source: Field Data, 2020

The results of the customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions as presented in Table 4.17, and it shows that majority of customers (that is, 218 representing 77.3%) are willing to visit the restaurants again in the future. Again, 224 respondents representing 79.4% indicated that they would recommend the restaurants to other people.

Table 4.18 presents the results on meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention. As the results clearly show, customers who regarded meal experience as poor disagreed to visit such restaurants again in the future. Also, 62.4% of customers who rated their meal experience as fair agreed to revisit while 21.2% disagreed to visit again. Again, 78.7% of respondents who felt their meal experience was good agreed to visit again in the future whereas 91.6% of customers who rated their meal experience as excellent agreed to visit such restaurants again in the future. The results of the chi-

square test further shows that there is a significant relationship between customers' meal experience and the intention to revisit.

Similarly, customers who ranked their meal experience as poor disagreed to recommend such restaurants to other people. With regards to those customers who rated their meal experience as fair, 63.3% indicated that they would recommend such restaurants to others while 24.6% were uncertain. 84.8% of customers who assessed their meal experience as good agreed to recommend the restaurants to others. In much the same way, 92.4% of customers rated their meal experience as excellent and agreed to recommend such restaurants to other people. Once again, the Chi-square statistics as shown in the table were statistically significant demonstrating a significant relationship between meal experience and the intention to recommend the restaurants to other people.
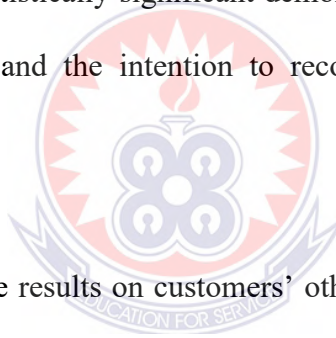
Finally, the third part of the results on customers' other intentions revealed that 95.2% of customers agreed to other intentions when their meal experience was poor. When meal experiences were good (33.1%) and excellent (41.3%) customers disagreed to other intentions. The Chi-square statistics is however, not statistically significant suggesting that there is no significant relationship between meal experience and other intentions of customers.

4.7 Discussion of Results

The study confirmed the findings of a research by Jankingthong & Gonejanart (2010), who found that more males patronize restaurants more frequently than females. Meal experience was assessed as good with respect to the various factors (food, service,

68

menu, price & atmosphere) used for rating respondents' assessment. This contradicts what was postulated by several authors findings (Anderson & Mossberg, 2004, Davis et al, 2012 and Ismail, 2012) who found that food, service and atmosphere were the main determinant factors of meal experience.

Furthermore, Han & Ryu (2009) and Venor (2013) asserts that positive post-purchase behavioural intention emanates from positive meal experience. This was confirmed in Table 3, when more than three quarters of the respondents agreed to revisit the restaurant and recommend. At df=16, recommendation (p=0.000) and re-visit (p=0.001) had a probability value (p<0.05) indicating that there is a significant relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention. This revelation from the study, confirms the assertion made by Ladhari (2009) and Jani & Han (2011) that there is a link between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention. Result for hypothesis tested indicated that reject Ho for re-visit and recommendation, then fail to reject alternative intentions.

However only about one third of respondents openly indicated that they will embark on alternative intentions if their expectations are not met whilst seventy percent did not disclose exactly what they will do to their dissatisfied meal experience. Again, results from the research in agreement to literature from authors [21,22] has proved that dissatisfied customers either leave without complaining, or take detrimental actions including word of mouth criticisms, switching patronage to other restaurants/boycott and then complain to others thereby reducing patronage. Conclusively, the research revealed that there was a significant relationship between meal experience and customers' post-purchase behavioural intention.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter finalizes the entire work. It summarizes the major findings obtained from the study, conclusion and recommendations made to operators of the restaurant business. In addition, the study provides suggestions for future researchers who may be considering the same or similar area of research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Indeed, meal experience is very important to customers. To a very large extent, if a customer perceives a meal experience to be very nice and good, it is likely they will come back to the restaurant in the future. It is against this background that this study was carried out to examine customer meal experience in grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis. After applying various statistical techniques such as correlation, regression as well as descriptive analysis, the following findings were obtained in the study.

- ❖ The study found that background characteristics such as gender, occupation, age, monthly income and marital status influence people's decisions do dine in restaurants.
- ❖ The study also found that majority of the sampled respondents (approximately 47%) were young people between the ages of 18 – 25. In addition, greater percentages (roughly 52%) are also single.
- ❖ Again, the study showed that majority of the customers who responded to the questionnaires clearly revealed their intentions to visit those restaurants again in the future.

❖ It was also found in the study that prices of products sold by grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis are perceived to be moderate which is contrary to the general conception that restaurants products are more expensive.

❖ The study also revealed that there is significantly positive correlation between customer meal experience on one hand and service quality, food quality and restaurant environment on the other hand.

❖ The study further found that there is a positive and significant relationship between meal experience and post-behavioural intentions of customers.

❖ The results of the estimated regression model showed that all three predictors, namely, service quality, food quality and restaurant environment have significantly positive impact on the level of customer meal experience. The study further found that food quality exerts the strongest influence on customer meal experience which reemphasizes the fact that food constitutes the core product of the restaurant business.

5.3 Conclusion

This study essentially aimed at examining customer meal experience in grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis. The study employed quantitative research design. Primary data were gathered from various customers of some selected grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis through questionnaire administration. The study drew three hundred (300) customers but only two hundred and eighty-two (282) responded to the structured questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS/PASW version 20.

In addition to descriptive analysis, correlation coefficients and regression results were estimated for all the variables. The results showed that background characteristics of people such as gender, occupation, age, monthly income and marital status influence their decisions to dine in restaurants. It was further discovered in the study that there is significantly positive correlation between customer meal experience on one hand and service quality, food quality and restaurant environment on the other hand. Finally, the results of the estimated regression equation showed that food quality exerts the strongest influence on customer meal experience, followed by service quality.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the research findings identified in Section 5.2 above, the study proposed the following recommendations.

The study showed that food quality plays the most influential role in the meal or dining experience among customers of the selected grade two restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis. In order to maintain this, the study recommends that operators of restaurants should have a more efficient and reliable supply chain for fresh and high quality ingredients. It is also recommended that all processes involved in food preparation must at all times be closely checked and controlled to make sure that the high standard food quality is maintained regularly to enhance customer meal experience.

It was found in the study that service quality is very important in enhancing customer meal experience in grade two restaurants in Kumasi. In order to provide better quality of service or improve on the existing service, the study recommends that restaurant operators or managers must continually provide orientations and in-service training

programmes for their employees. This will not only boost their customer service skills but also enhance their ability to meet the needs of customers in a timely and efficient manner. It is also recommended that restaurant operators and managers must execute strategies that reduce waiting time for customers since time management is very important in service delivery.

Among the three explanatory variables, restaurant environment had the least impact on customer meal experience among customers of the selected grade two restaurants, even though it was positive. It is therefore important that restaurant operators and managers provide conducive atmosphere for their customers. This can be done by ensuring adequate and good ventilation, continuous cleanliness of the dining environment, good sanitary conditions in lavatories or washrooms, good lighting system, good music and movies, among others. Ensuring these will not only make customers feel comfortable but also enhance customers' meal experience and increase their intention to visit the restaurant again in the future.

The study also found that majority of restaurant's customers in the Kumasi Metropolis are young people who are mainly single. It is therefore imperative that restaurant operators and managers develop strategies that target these categories of people. In this regard, restaurants can institute promotional strategies aimed at young people. It is also important to implement delivery systems that target customers with busy schedules.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The current study focused on Grade Two restaurants which are very limited in number in the Kumasi Metropolis. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future researches or studies should consider a larger number of Grade Two restaurants with possible extension to other jurisdictions (or cities) such as Accra and Takoradi which have some number of Grade Two restaurants.

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APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI

DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EDUCATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESTAURANT CUSTOMERS

RESPONDENTS CONSENT NOTE

I am a student of University of Education – Kumasi campus. I am conducting a research on the **assessing customer meal experiences of grade two restaurant in the Kumasi Metropolis**. This questionnaire is designed to gather information to assist in carrying out this research which is part of our academic requirements for masters of philosophy. Kindly respond honestly by answering the questions appropriately.

I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any information given is beneficial. I am aware that the information being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed.

Please tick [√] accordingly where applicable

PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Gender: A. Male   [   ]   B. female   [   ]

2. Age: A. 18 – 25years   [   ]   B. 26 – 33 years   [   ]

   C. 34 - 41years   [   ]   D. 42 – 49 years [   ]

   E. 50 years and above [   ]

3. Occupation: A. employee [   ]   B. Self-employed   [   ]

4. Marital status: A. Single [   ]   B. Married [   ]   C. Divorced [   ]

104

5. Monthly income   A. GH¢ 1000 – GH¢3000   [   ]   B.   GH¢3000 – GH¢5000   [   ]

                     C. GH¢5000 – GH¢10000 [   ]

6. Dining companion: A. Alone [   ]   B. Family [   ]   C. Friends [   ]

                     D. Business colleagues [   ]   E. Couple   [   ]

7. How frequent do you visit restaurant

    A. 1 – 2 times a week [   ]   B.   3 – 4 times a week [   ]

    C.   5 – 6 times a week   [   ]   D   More than 7 times a week   [   ]

PART II

1. Which aspect of the meal experience disappointed you?

      A.   FOOD   [   ]

      B.   SERVICE   [   ]

      C.   ATMOSPHERE   [   ]

      D.   NONE   [   ]
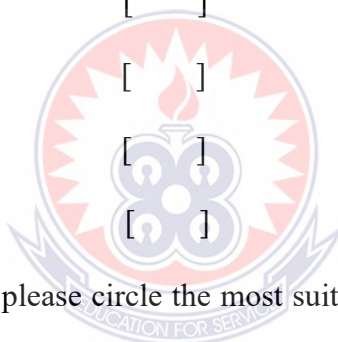
2. Based on the statement please circle the most suitable answer to indicate the extent

    to which you are excellent or poor with the statement by placing circle on a scale of

    1 up to 5

    E = Excellent, G = Good, F = Fair, U = Uncertain P = Poor,

Meal Experience

STATEMENT	E	G	F	U	P
How will you rate the value of the food?					
Did the overall restaurant experience put you in good mood?					
Did you really enjoyed yourself in this restaurant?					
How will you rate the range of option on menu?					
How best will you describe varieties of food and drinks on menu?					

3. How satisfied are you with the whole meal experience offered?

    1. TOTALLY DISSATISFIED [ ]   2. DISSATISFIED [ ]

    3. SATISFIED [ ]   4. TOTALLY SATISFIED [ ]

4. Which aspect of the food quality impressed you most?

Please tick [√] one box only

Strongly Agree (S.A) Agree (A) Neutral (N) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (S.D)

Food Impression

Question	STATEMENT	S.A	A	N	D	S.D
1	Presentation or appearance was visually attractive					
2	Taste of the food					
3	Temperature					
4	Nutrition food					
5	Smell of food was enticing					
6	Food quantity is sufficient					

5. Which aspect of service quality impressed you most?

    Please tick [√] one box only

    Strongly Agree (S.A) Agree (A) Neutral (N) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (S.D)

Customer Service

Question	STATEMENT	S.A	A	N	D	S.D
1	Friendly, polite and helpful staff					
2	Attentive staff					
3	Efficient service					
4	Staff have food and beverage knowledge					
5	Sympathetic handling of complaints					
6	Willing to help always					
7	Prompt and quick service					

6. Which aspect of the restaurant environment impressed you most?

Please tick [√] one box only.

Strongly Agree (S.A) Agree (A) Neutral (N) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (S.D)

Restaurant Environment

Question	STATEMENT	S.A	A	N	D	S.D
1	Restaurant attractive interior design and décor'					
2	Restaurant appearance					
3	Table setting crockery and cutlery					
4	Dining areas are thoroughly clean					
5	General excitement a place generates music					
6	Employee are neat and well-dressed					

7. What improvement, if any, would you like to see in the variety of meal on offer?

………………………………………………...…………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

8. What are your perceptions about service quality in this restaurant?

Please tick [√] accordingly at where applicable

E = Excellent,   G = Good,   F = Fair,   U = Uncertain,   P = Poor,

STATEMENT: FOOD	E	G	F	U	P
1. Food and beverage presentation of food					
2. Garnishing					
3. Colour of food					
4. Colour of beverage					
5. Smell or odour of beverage					
6. Smell or odour of food					
7. Taste of food					
8. Taste of beverage					
9. Temperature of food					

STATEMENT: FOOD	E	G	F	U	P
10. Temperature of beverage					
11. Variety of menu items					
12. Value of money					
13. Great value as compared to others					
SERVICE					
1. Friendliness and politeness of staff					
2. Attentiveness of staff					
3. Staff greeting guest					
4. Efficient services					
5. Staff have food and beverage knowledge					
6. Sympathetic handling of complaints					
7. Overall quality service					
8. Attractiveness of exterior					
RESTAURANT ENVIRONMENT					
1. Was the seating arrangement comfortable					
2. Location or easy accessibility of restaurant					
3. Ventilation of the room					
4. Dining area was thoroughly cleaned					
5. Good sanitation of the surrounding					
6. Pleasant smell or odour					

9. What is your perception about the price of service on offer?

   A. High [   ]   B. Moderate [   ]   C. Low [   ]

10. Thinking about value for money how you would best describe the meal in general

   A. Good value for money   [   ]

   B. Reasonable   [   ]

   C. Bad   [   ]

   D. Please give reason(s) ……...……………………………………………

11. Have you dinned in this restaurant before?

108

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

12. What is your main reason for visiting the restaurant?

    A. No time to cook   [   ]

    B. Value for money   [   ]

    C. Change of taste   [   ]

13. What are post-purchase behavioural intention?

    Please tick [ ] one of the each of the following questions.

    Strongly Agree (S.A) Agree (A) Neutral (N) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (S.D)

Post-purchase behavioural intention

Question	STATEMENT	S	A	N	D	S
1	Would you like to come back to this restaurant in the future?					
2	Would you intend to dine in the restaurant again?					
3	Would you say positive things about the restaurant to others					
4	Would you recommend the restaurant to your friend or others					
5	Do you made the right choice by dinning at this restaurant?					
6	Do you always consider the restaurant to be one of the choice on your list?					

14. Do you think that the smell of the food stimulate your appetite?

    A. Yes   [   ]

    B. No   [   ]

15. Did the presentation of the food met your expectation?

    A. Yes   [   ]

    B. No   [   ]

16. Were the food served in a fresh and timely manner?

    A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

17. Did the restaurant provide accurate bill to your expectation?

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

18. Did the restaurant serves food exactly as what you ordered?

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

19. Were you excited about the aroma of the restaurant?

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

20. Were the dining area thoroughly cleaned

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

21. Did the pleasant smell or odour in the restaurants met your expectation?

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

22. Were you satisfied with the services provided?

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

23. Do you have the intention of revisit this particular restaurant?

A. Yes   [   ]

B. No   [   ]

Thank you very much for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire your participation is sincerely appreciated.