UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

MEAL EXPERIENCE AND POST-PURCHASE BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS OF CUSTOMERS OF GRADE THREE RESTAURANTS WITHIN SEKONDI-TAKORADI

FRANCES BETTY FRAIKUE

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BY

FRANCES BETTY FRAIKUE

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT.

November, 2014

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name: ……………………………………………………………

Signature: ………………………………… Date: …………………………..

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Name: ………………………………………………….

Signature: ………………………….. Date: ………………………………….

Co-Supervisor's Name: ………………………………………………………….

Signature: …………………………… Date: …………………………………

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ABSTRACT

Meal experience forms an integral part of the growth and development of restaurants. The main objective of the study was to examine the effect of meal experience on customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions to grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi. Three models from Kivela et al. (1999), Kleynhans (2003) and Ryu and Han (2010) provided the theoretical bases for the study.

A non-experimental design (explanatory) underpinned by the positivist approach (quantitative) was adopted. Questionnaire was employed to collect the data, and convenience sampling technique was used to select 272 customers. The statistical techniques used for the analysis were, frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations, means, standard deviation, chi-square and logistic regression.

The study revealed that there was no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. A similar finding was registered with respect to respondents' reasons for eating out and meal experience. However, there were significant effects with regard to customers' socio-demographic characteristic (sex) and perception of the meal experience (menu & price) on the overall meal experience. The main factors that influenced meal experience were food, menu, price, service and atmosphere. It was concluded that, there was a significant relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions (re-visit & recommendation). It was recommended that restaurant managers pay extra attention to food preparation, environment, location, service and periodic training for staff.

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate my work to my Rector, Takoradi Polytechnic, Rev. Prof. Daniel Nyarko and my Dean for Graduate Studies, UCC. Prof. Lawrence Owusu Ansah.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

In the past, food was consumed at home and during social gatherings, but with time, variations emerged as a result of occupational dynamics within the work force (Nkunu Akyea, 2013). Andaleeb and Caskey (2007) affirm that food consumed outside the home has become common these days as more and more women work thereby making the trend of eating out a necessity for many people. This gradually gave birth to the establishment of food and beverage sector which includes restaurants (Clarke & Chen, 2007). A restaurant is described as an establishment which is well designed and may occupy a whole building or part and meant for the preparation and service of food and beverages for consumption (Mensah, 2009).

In Ghana, records from National Tourism Development Plan (2013 - 2027) indicate that in 2010, restaurants in the grade 1 category were (59), grade 2 (153) and grade 3 (141). Again, according to Ghana Tourism Authority (2013), Western Region has 27 registered restaurants made up of 2 grade (1), 2 grade (2) and 23 grade (3). This depicts that, there are more grade 3 restaurants established in the region. Grade 3 restaurants have satisfactory choice of dishes served in a modest or normal setting (Mensah, 2009). It also operates in an informal atmosphere and has trained staff who offers an appreciable level of service.

Hemmington (2007:749) asserts that, "in the context of the hospitality industry: customers do not just buy service delivery, service quality, food and drink, events or functions; rather they buy memories, meal experience and

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value". The word meal means food or time for eating and is also termed as the edible whole food that human beings consume basically for growth, energy and protection (Harper, 2010). Meal as described by Hartwell, Edwards and Beavis (2007b) has emotional benefits partly derived from customers' expectation, while experience is any sensation or knowledge resulting from an individual's participation in any activity, specifically in a restaurant set up.

Meal experience was first used by Campbell-Smith (1967) and later became a worldwide term used in the industry. Meal experience begins when customers are seated at their table and ends when they vacate their table in a restaurant (Noone, Kimes, Mattila & Wirtz, 2007). Brown, Edwards & Hartwell, (2013) opined that meal experience encompasses an array of different thoughts and events that occur when a customer visits a hospitality facility like a restaurant. Meal experience is defined by some authors as the combination of several factors like food, menu variety, service, atmosphere, group size, other customers, facilities for children, recommendation, new experience, provision of unique twist and price value in order to achieve customer satisfaction (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Davis, Lockwood, Alcott & Pantelidis, 2012; Ismail, 2012; Pantelidis & Marée, 2009).

Research has proven that quality service is one of the main factors that influences customers' meal experience and leads to post-purchase behavioural intention (Ladhari, 2009; Negi, 2009). As customers enjoy quality service, they get retained; new customers are attracted together with enhancement of corporate image. However, this is achieved through the use of positive word-of-mouth and recommendations which guarantee survival and profitability (Ladhari, 2009; Negi, 2009).

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Post-purchase behavioural intention is defined as the future behaviour commitment to purchase a product or service when other alternatives are possible (Chen & Chen, 2010). Cronin and Taylor (1992) outlines three components of post-purchase behavioural intention as re-visit intention, recommendation and alternative intention. Regular customers are described as desirable patrons who already appreciate a restaurant's product so much that they keep coming, and they also tend to spend more than other customers. Again, the more regular customers a restaurant attracts, the better the prediction of sales (Shock, 2004; Vener, 2007).

Re-visit intention is termed as a situation whereby a customer intends to patronize a restaurant several times in a month (Shock, 2004). There is re-visit intention where a customer has enjoyed a positive meal experience and intends to visit the same premises several times (Venor, 2007). Furthermore, re-visit intention or recommendation mostly takes place after a customer has enjoyed a meal, received better service, enjoyed variety of meals or paid a reasonable price for food. It could also be as a result of positive-word-of-mouth, loyalty programmes for re-visiting customers' or bounce back programmes designed for first time customers' (Geissler & Rucks 2011; Venor, 2007).

On the contrary, alternative intentions occur when customers are dissatisfied. Research conducted by National Restaurant Association cited in Brown et al. (2013) showed that more than 75% of restaurant operators saw an increase in sales as a result of customer loyalty programmes. This study seeks to examine the effect of meal experience on customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions at restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

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Statement of the problem

Restaurants are public food service establishments designed in whole or in part that specialize in the sale of prepared food for consumption on or off the premises (Barrows & Powers, 2009). There has been an increase in the number of restaurants operating in the country, and the successful operation of these restaurants depends on customers' meal experience (Baraban & Durocher, 2010; Gartenstein, 2013). Food and beverages are the second most profitable and leading source of revenue in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry (Holtzman, 2010). In most tourist destinations, food service accounts for about 40% of tourist revenue (Wang, Chen, Fan & Lu, 2012). Similarly, Akyeampong (2007) also confirms that food and beverage is ranked second after accommodation with 24.1%. In Ghana, specifically within Sekondi-Takoradi, it is yet to be identified whether the full potential of food sales to clients in restaurants has been achieved through positive meal experiences.

Part of the problem of restaurants inability to maximize profit in food service may be partly attributed to the inability to offer memorable meal experiences since customer-satisfaction is a significant determinant of repeat visit intentions (Han, 2005). Sariano (2002) states that repeat customers are the key to successful restaurant operations and that an unhappy customer will not return. Good memories derived from restaurants induce post-purchase behavioural intentions such as re-visit and recommendation (Petrick, 2000). Unfortunately, most restaurant patrons who encounter negative meal experience do not only look for alternatives but also influence diners around them (Alegrea & Garaua, 2010; Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2001).

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There have been a number of studies on meal experience and factors that influence customer satisfaction. However, the authors neither focused nor linked them up to post-purchase behavioural intentions (Akyeampong, 2007; Davis et al. 2012; Ismail, 2012; Mensah, 2009; & Noone et al., 2007). Chauhan and Sharma (2011) justified that a single dissatisfied customer represents not only loss of revenue from poor word-of-mouth, but also diners are discouraged from patronizing such restaurant and will therefore search for alternatives. Ismail (2012) confirms that satisfaction with dining experience encompasses pre-meal, actual-meal and post-meal experience. The study therefore seeks to examine the effect of meal experience on customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions to grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

Research objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of meal experience on customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions to grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

The specific objectives were to:

1. identify customers' reasons for eating out in grade 3 restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi;

2. analyse customers' perceptions of the meal experience in grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi;

3. examine the factors that influence customers' meal experiences;

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4. assess the relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions;

5. suggest recommendations for restaurant operators so that positive meal experiences of customers can be sustained;

Research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Ho: There is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and meal experience of respondents.

Hypothesis 3

Ho: There is no significant effect of:

a. socio-demographic characteristics of respondents' on the overall meal experience;

b. respondents' perception of the meal experience on the overall meal experience;

Hypothesis 4

Ho: There is no significant relationship between customers' meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Significance of the study

The study aims at identifying meal experience by focusing primarily on factors that contribute to customers' post-purchase decision-making with

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intentions to repurchase and/or recommend. Customers will have an insight about what they ought to experience in restaurants in order to gain customer satisfaction. Students or trainees studying Hospitality Management will acquire knowledge and utilize the information during industrial attachment programmes so as to promote customer satisfaction.

In addition, this study will propose integrated results and suggestions needed for the assessment and contribution of managers and service staff for the provision of positive meal experience and its effect on post-purchase behavioural intentions. It will also guide employees to focus on the expectation of customers by promoting good working environment.

Furthermore, it will add to existing literature by providing information to restaurant managers, and prospective entrepreneurs on how to sustain an existing or new business on meal experience as well as post-purchase behavioural intentions. Future researchers can also develop other areas of interest like the impact of managers and employees on positive meal experience.

Finally, information obtained from recommendations and conclusions from the respondents and the researcher can be adapted for employees' periodic in-service training so that customer satisfaction will be a fundamental concern for growth and development of the industry.

Limitations of the study

The study has some few limitations beginning with the area of study. It is limited to only grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi due to time and resource constraints. At the restaurants, only customers (repeat or first timers)

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who ate out there qualified to partake in the study. The first time customers might have answered better if that was not their first time in the restaurant. Also, data collection which commenced in the middle of the month might have denied some other customers from participating due to financial challenges. There are other customers who patronise grade 1 and 2 restaurants as well as hotel restaurants who might have equally contributed massively to this thesis. Customers who were illiterate or felt lazy to fill the questionnaire themselves after eating had to engage the researcher to fill for them. Here, the questions were read to them, and for some it had to be explained in the local dialect. The use of convenience sampling technique to select respondents had to be done with caution since average daily customer expectations kept changing. However, reliability and validity were assured therefore generalization was possible to achieve consistency of results.

Scope and Delimitation

The research was conducted specifically in Sekondi-Takoradi. This Twin City has the concentration of restaurants within the Shama Ahanta East Metropolis. It was intended to find out reasons, perceptions, factors and effects of meal experiences on post-purchase behavioural intentions of customers in grade three restaurants. It would have been useful to conduct the research in the entire Western Region, but the period allocated on the academic calendar for thesis writing will not permit that, therefore, the scope for the study was within the Twin City. Respondents were made up of 291 people who dine out in all grade three restaurants within Sekondi-Takoradi in February 2014.

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Chapter Organisation

The thesis has five main chapters and under each, specific sub-topics were discussed. Chapter one comprises of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and hypotheses, significance of the study, scope and delimitation, limitations and chapter organization.

Chapter two entails the review of related literature. Topics reviewed include general overview of meal experience, reasons for eating out and its influence on meal experience, customers' perceptions of meal experiences, socio-demographic characteristics of customers and meal experience, factors that influence customers' meal experience together with summary from different authors. In addition, the chapter outlines post-purchase behavioural intentions of customers, influence of meal experience on post-purchase behavioural intentions as well as some theoretical frameworks and a conceptual framework suitable for the study.

The third chapter outlines the research methodology employed for the study. Others considered include study area, research philosophy, research design, sources of data, population and sampling procedure, sampling techniques, data collection instrument, pre-testing, data collection procedures, problems encountered on the field, ethical issues and data analysis.

Chapter four analyses and discusses findings from the quantitative data. The analysis and discussions were based on the research objectives and hypotheses for the study.

Finally, chapter five presented a general summary of the study, summary of main findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future studies were also outlined.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter reviews relevant literature on meal experience and its effect on post-purchase behavioural intentions as well as the conceptual framework guiding the study. Topics covered include meal experience, reasons for eating out, socio-demographics, customers' perceptions of meal experiences, factors influencing meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention of customers to grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

Overview of the meal experience

A meal is a portion of food which is primarily eaten in one sitting at homes, restaurants and other eating centres basically to restore hunger (Warde & Martens, 2000). Meal is regarded as an essential part of a leisure journey where employees effortlessly draw customers' attention to a unique culinary experience in a restaurant, basically for the provision of their physiological/biological needs (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Experiences are memorable events that engage customers' inherently in personal ways and it occurs when an outlet uses food service, food, atmosphere as props to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event (Pine 11 & Gilmore, 2000). Experience exists only in the minds of the individual, sometimes derived from interactions or involvement with series of activities (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

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Meal experience takes place anytime someone eats out anywhere apart from the home such as the restaurant which involves payment for goods and services (Warde & Martens, 2000). A customer's meal experience originates from a set of interactions between him or her and a product which incites a reaction (Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger, 2009). It involves direct or indirect contact with a company which involves the purchase and use of a product as well as unplanned encounters with waiter/waitress or other people within the restaurant (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Again, Noone et al. (2009) and Ismail (2012) classified meal experience as pre-process/pre-meal, in-process/actual process and post-process/post-meal.

Reasons for eating out

Dining out is considered as a form of leisure, time spent outside household production (Stewart, Luoma, Schlekat, Doblin & Hieb, 2004). The reason for eating out varies from one individual to the other and may include physiological/biological needs, social needs, esteem/psychological need, convenience, business/functional needs and health reasons (Davis et al., 2012; Edwards, 2000; Jones, 2002; Keller, 2007; Warde & Martens, 2000; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Other minor reasons include variety; labour, economic, media, culture/tradition and impulse, increased employment of women, and also through positive-word-of-mouth. Indeed, some people have no choice than to eat out.

These reasons can be linked to the decision theory (Hansson, 1994) which is the analysis of willpower that an individual has in terms of what to

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eat out and why. It describes the situation where individuals appear to have inconsistent preferences in making behavioural decisions as to what motivates them to eat out. This implies that people may have different reasons for eating out at different times. According to Hitti (2008), most people (92.3%) ate out for convenience reasons during lunch time whilst 33.1% ate dinner out for social reasons. In line with the decision theory majority of respondents fundamentally ate for convenience purposes. On the contrary, Warde and Martens (2000), rather theorized that eating out was basically for pleasure, leisure and necessity as a result, the reasons are closely linked to meeting one's esteem needs, social and physiological needs.

The quest to meet physiological/biological needs (food and drink) is basically for survival, relieve hunger, sate one's appetite, and quench one's thirst were some reasons for dining out (Edwards, 2000; Warde & Martens, 2000). In addition, people eat out because they have no other option especially when they are far away from home, there are no facilities available for meal preparation and the need to restore hunger is essential (Jones, 2002). Ismail (2012) confirmed that women's involvement in the workforce resulting in less time for domestic cooking has given restaurants more business as they meet the physiological needs of individuals and families.

Dining at restaurants has become a symbol of status where people flaunt and display their fashionable lifestyle (Finkelstein, 1989b). Knutson and Patton (1993) indicated that a social occasion is one of the most fundamental reasons for eating out, whilst Jones (2003) also reported that meeting social needs is described as part of cultural heritage where people eat out in restaurants during special events. Keller (2007) also explained that

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recommendations made through positive-word-of-mouth from friends encourage others because it has an important weight in the decision-making process of people eating out in a particular restaurant. Goldman (1993) and Lillicrap and Cousins (1993) affirmed that social networking is a desire to enjoy the company of business colleagues, and leisure where people decide to go to a restaurant just to dine with friends. On the contrary, Davis et al. (2012) posit that one reason for dining was about meeting social needs. However, research undertaken by Hitti (2008) stated that only about 33.1% of guest who ate out in restaurants did so as a way of socializing with family and friends.

Esteem/psychological needs are stimulated through the enhancement of self-esteem and fulfilling life style needs, as a result of advertising and promotion through the intake of delicious dishes (Lillicrap & Cousins, 1993; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Jones (2002) believes that people eat out for status purpose, whilst Goldman (1993) opined that it is a reward or a treat for celebration. Davis et al. (2012) claimed that customers eat and drink in restaurants so as to have value for disposable income. Ismail (2012) also confirmed that the growth and increase in purchasing power, better household standards of living, has motivated more people to eat out. Furthermore, Stewart et al. (2004) conclude that with higher monthly household incomes people spend significantly more on food away from home simply because apart from being hungry, they can easily afford.

Eating out is solely for convenience and companionship as well as saving time and effort in cooking (Davis et al., 2012; Goldman, 1993 & Ismail, 2012). In addition, people are not ready to spend a large portion of their time in the kitchen just to cook food so they prefer to try other cuisine (Knutson &

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Patton, 1993; Hensley, 2000a). Furthermore, Hitti (2008) opined that eating out during lunch time in restaurants was very convenient because 92.3% of diners stated that it is quick and 80.1% said it is easy to get. People eat out due to their inability to get home for meals, having to attend to an event or do not have the knowledge and skill to prepare the food they like (Lillicrap & Cousins, 1993). The desire for someone to cook, serve you at table and wash up influence some people's decision to eat out (Jones, 2002; Lillicrap & Cousins, 1993).

Furthermore, people eat out because they have no one to prepare meals for them; they are unmarried or stay far away from their wives. In addition, some food require long-standing and labour intensive in preparation like some assorted soup plus 'fufu', 'banku', and 'kenkey', so it is conveniently best to eat out (Jones, 2002). Others have no option but to eat out in particular restaurants because of proximity and the cost of food is relatively reasonable (Jones, 2002). In the end, Longhart (2010) opined that restaurateurs should promote "stickiness" in the minds of consumers who basically patronise their premises solely for convenience sake with promotions and surprise packges in order to sustain them.

Business meetings are ended with a lunch or dinner in chosen restaurants depending on the level of business (Davis et al., 2012). Some people eat out basically to impress their guests by taking them out (Jones, 2002), whilst Clare (2011) is also of the view that when meeting someone for the first time, a business lunch can be used to seal the transaction.

The health of individuals is described as one of the reasons for eating out. Jones (2002) indicates that people who do not have domestic means or

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assistance or strength to prepare meals for them, especially the ones that require long-standing and labour intensive in preparation opt to eat healthy food outside their homes. Advertisements on nutrition and healthy living have also diverted menu selection by customers. People now decide to dine in restaurants because they are prepared to pay a premium price for high quality food which has little or no fat, example grilled protein foods, salad with no dressing, steamed dishes and fresh fruit juice (Davis et al., 2012). Ready prepared food has become a priority for both men and women as late eating has its own health implication. Hence, the patronage of restaurant foods has become a priority so that people can avoid having to cook and eat after close of work late in the evening (Ismail, 2012).

Reasons for eating out and its influence on meal experience

People go out to restaurants with some expectations particularly to socialize in a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere such as the arrangement of the furniture, and also look up to service staff as an important asset in the restaurant performance for the achievement of positive meal experience (Hansen, 2005; Reynolds & Hwang, 2005). According to Warde and Martens (2000:47) "Reasons to eat out are for pleasure, leisure and necessity".

> *"General reasons for eating out included doing or experiencing something different from the everyday, getting a break from cooking and serving, relaxing, having a treat, socialising, celebrating, a liking for food, and preventing hunger" (Hansen, 2005:47).*

Hansen (2005) further explained that people combine their meal experience with eating out as the basis to attain some kind of satisfaction. Warde and

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Martens (2000) also discovered that 75% of people eat out because they want to share mutual experiences during the meal for some degree of customer satisfaction. . Kasapila (2006) posits that some customers' reason for eating out was to enjoy quality food alongside good ambience and service for a pleasant meal experience. Earlier on, Warde and Martens (2000) indicated that some people passed on judgement about eating out experiences to others and that indirectly motivated them to discover meal experiences on their own.

Customers' perceptions of the meal experience

Perception is literally referred to as a process of organising thoughts for the formation of a concept. Amenumey (1998) explains perception as a process whereby an individual organises and interprets information to create something meaningful. Cherry (2014) in 'about.com psychology', defines perception as a sensory experience which involves both the recognition of environmental stimuli and actions in response to stimuli. Dhingra (2011) describes perception as a complex process which yields a unique picture. It also depends on some factors that can reside in the perceiver, target or object being perceived and the context in which perception takes place. Cherry (2014) and Gustafsson, Ostrom, Johansson and Mossberg (2006) further revealed that perception makes use of the five senses that is sight, taste, smell, touch and hearing.

Gustafsson et al. (2006) discovered that sight gives information on colour, appearance, quantity, furniture, equipment, room and other guests. The mouth gives a perception of taste, quality and texture whilst the nose perceives aroma of the meal. Again the sense of hearing for example through word-of-

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mouth allows people to perceive a restaurant in their own way. In addition, Reynolds and Hwang (2006) confirmed that customers perceive food differently because of varying expectations concerning the degree of appearance, taste, consistent quality and quantity of food as well as fair price of food which yields customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the perceptions of customers in the overall meal experience varies massively in terms of food, variety of menu, price of food, service, atmosphere, location and the pace at which activities take place in the restaurant (Noone et al., 2009; Reynolds & Hwang, 2006; Sariano, 2002 and Shahin & Semea, 2010). Reynolds and Hwang (2006) also discovered that customers perceive service as employees who are neatly groomed, well trained, provide information about food and serve exactly as ordered. Shahin and Semea (2010) pointed out that customers actually perceive service as a determinant for meal experience. Again, customers were of the view that dining experience factors are perceived in terms of variety of menu, explanatory and easy to understand menu, as well as menu being updated periodically and being healthy (Shahin & Semea, 2010).

Noone et al. (2009) on their part contended that the perception of pace deals with either lengthy wait time or slow pace which sometimes diminishes customer satisfaction leading to feeling of anxiety and frustration. Meanwhile, Sariano (2002) perceived a restaurant as a clean room, moderate décor, music, furniture, safe location and with accessible parking space. Finally, Kleynhans (2003) stated that the first five minutes stay of indirect attention within a restaurant also has a vast influence on customer's perception of the meal

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experience. This is because, a customer's feeling of welcome is felt by how he/she is handled within that short period by the service staff.

Socio demographic characteristics of customers and meal experience

Gender, age, income and occupation are socio demographic units of analysis that are significant determinants of satisfaction, experience and purchase decision (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; & Kaura, 2011). According to Kleynhans (2003:23) "Consumers differ regarding their age, gender, nationality, genetics, culture and tradition and, therefore will react differently regarding their expectations of the meal experience as well as their perceptions or assessment of the meal experience". These variables are so important in designing any food service establishment desired for customers. Demographics that include gender, age, marital status, highest level of education, occupation, monthly income and religion reinforce the importance in evaluating meal experience and forming perception (positive and negative) about satisfaction (Kumar & Lim, 2008).

Gender has an impact on perceptions of quality and physical environment, and perceived differences in gender are linked up to the influence of stereotypes during gender role socialisation (Ganesan-Lim, Russel-Bennet & Dagger 2008). Women rely more heavily on the environment and service evaluation, whilst men pay attention to sales employees in making purchase decision (Laroche, Saad, Cleveland & Browne, 2000). Kleynhans (2003) confirms that males and females attach different importance to food choice. In this context, males rate that food taste and nutrition are important and are not ready to try new food when it comes to

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choice but females hold on to taste as being important and are willing to try new or strange foods. Saad and Gill (2000) are of the view that men differ from women and that gender has an impact on perception of outcome quality, physical environment and taste of meal. Again, more men are risk takers regarding eating out and the food joint. Also, according to National Institute of Health (2004) men visit restaurants more frequently than women.

Age is described as a powerful determinant of consumer behaviour which has an individual purchasing ability and preference (Neal, Quester & Hawkins, 2002). According to Ganesan-Lim et al. (2008:8) "Age has a significant effect on the perceptions of customers", but gender and income have no main significant effects. Reynolds and Hwang (2005) observe that generation X and Y born from 1965-1976 and 1977-1994 respectively are noted for frequent eating out whilst older consumers (baby boomers) shy away from trying new cuisine but visit restaurants as an opportunity to socialize. Kleynhans (2003) also explains that the younger generations of customers eat out a lot, because they conveniently follow food fads and try new ones as well whilst Settembre (2013) currently revealed that people aged between 18-29 years eat at fast food restaurants weekly. Lakos (2013) posits that two main groups of customers who are aged between 21-30 years (35%) and 31-40 years (31%) eat out in restaurants more frequently and the figure keeps dropping as the age advances. Historical information states that people eat out less frequently as they get older (Marran, 2013).

Callan and Bowman (2000) supports that age differences also breeds variations in one's perception just as Ganesan-Lim et al. (2008) indicate that younger individuals are mostly seen in grade three restaurants because the cost

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per meal is reasonable. Kasapila (2006) also noted that 66% of young adults aged 18-25 years were found to be the majority of respondents seen patronizing restaurants followed by those aged between 26-30 years. These age ranges were also linked up to the type of restaurant being grade three. On the contrary, there was a stereotype that young adults' 18-47 years tend to choose their dining room over restaurant from 2009 to 2012 (Marran, 2013).

It is acknowledged that individuals with higher income levels mostly have higher educational levels and perceive meal experience differently from those with lower income (Ganesan-Lim et al., 2008). Low-income group earners eat out for convenience reasons especially when they lack some cooking facilities and experimenting with cooking is a luxury they cannot afford (Food today, 2014). Fast food restaurant operations or casual dining is designed to attract middle-income customers who enjoy dining out (Canny, 2014) whilst individual expenses of customers vary with age (Kaura, 2011). Settembre (2013) observes that 51% of Americans earning $75,000 annually patronised fast food restaurants every week than those who earn less.

Factors that influence customers' meal experience

Food is described as the most basic and most important factor that influences meal experiences and indeed an integral part of the overall experience at any restaurant (Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Niles, 2009). Discovering the sensory aspects of food includes taste of food, temperature, type of food, quality, quantity, textures, aroma and colour of food (Geissler & Rucks, 2011). Kleynhans (2003) and Davis et al. (2012) are of the view that food enhances total meal experience.

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It is also confirmed by Yong, Siang, Lok and Kuan (2013) that food quality is one of the most important forecaster and/or attributes that influences customer satisfaction. Namkung and Jang (2007) also stated that food presentation has a significant relationship with customer's meal satisfaction. Sariano (2002) opined that right temperature of food, taste of food, its quality and quantity is ultimately very important, because it also influences meal experience. Guaranteeing food quality emanates from the purchase of quality ingredients used in the preparation (Gregoire, 2013 & Mensah, 2009) together with the exhibition of skills and method of preparation (Gregoire, 2013). Cousins, Foskett and Gillespie (2002) concluded by stating that aroma also attracts and increases appetite but if the negative occurs it repels and decreases appetite.

Menu is another factor that influences meal experience and it is a list of food items which is either written out to form part of the décor or described to customers' when they enter restaurants (Gregoire, 2013). Restaurant menu served is mainly a'la carte (dishes that are individually priced) and table d'hôte (meal that has a set of price) (Hemmington, 2007, Mensah, 2009). Menu is further being described by Pantelidis and Marée (2009) as the center piece of any eating establishment. Bell & Meiselman (1995) described menu as written information which often contains pictures that entice customers to try new dishes. Clark & Wood (1999) revealed that menu is referred to as the center piece of any eatery. Bell and Meiselman (1995) emphasized that for menu to influence meal experience, it needs to be changed periodically to suit the trends of the customers. Later, Meiselman (2000) indicated that the composition of menu and recommendation made by waiters play a role in how

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varying meal as a whole is experienced by a customer whilst Wansink, Van-Ittersam and Painter (2005) also discovered that the sensory perception of different dishes is positively affected by the description of dishes presented in a menu.

Price is the amount of money charged for a product, a competitive tool and a major deciding factor influencing customers' meal experience (Gregoire, 2013). Namasivayam (2004) observed that the fairness of price has been identified as one psychological factor that influences consumers' reaction and decision to purchase. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) noted that the value for money vary from one restaurant to another or from one customer to another and also it massively affects a customer's choice, as well as the number of times a restaurant is patronized. In this light, Mensah (2009) pointed out that price is the only element of food service which brings in revenue and it is influenced by food quality, menu, ambience and service. It was also emphasized by Cousins et al. (2002) that customers will re-visit a restaurant not only because of food and service but also for good value for money spent on the meal in order to achieve positive meal experience.

Service as a determinant of meal experience is the presentation of food to the customer which takes many forms in a foodservice establishment (Gregoire, 2013). However in a restaurant, the only point of contact that customers have with the company is through the service staff (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004). Qin and Prybutok (2009) emphasize that service quality is one of the initiators of customer satisfaction. Davis et al. (2012) however discovered that service delivery has two main divisions, namely, actual/direct and ancillary/indirect services. Actual/direct service is when the

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waiter/waitress practically serves the food and beverage to customers, while the ancillary/indirect services are the provision of intangibles (friendly, polite and helpful, attentive and efficient service staff) experienced to enhance services (Davis et al., 2012; Gustafsson et al., 2006).

Hanson, Jensen and Gustafsson (2005) stressed that service is an essential part of the experience of eating in a restaurant which is paid for by customers. Tsai (2001) also pointed out that staff can meet consumers' expectations if they pay attention and effectively provide timely service. Walsh (2000) emphasized that for customer satisfaction to be accomplished, service staff should focus on what is important to each guest and strive to sustain it. Kleynhans (2003) buttressed the point by indicating that service staff ought to handle complaints professionally and promptly, thereby increasing satisfaction with experience.

The restaurant atmosphere influencing meal experience comprises of tangible and intangible aspects of a room which is the number one point of call and the first thing that a diner notices as he/she enters a restaurant (Gustafsson et al., 2006; Warde & Martens, 2000). Furthermore, atmosphere which is part of the tangible aspects of a restaurant was seen by customers as the size, shape, colour scheme, furniture and fittings, lighting, air conditioning, temperature, appearance, music, table settings, seating arrangement, crockery and cutlery. It also included staff appearance, attitude, age, dress, décor, overall cleanliness of the environment, and professionalism of the staff in addition to the intangible that depicts how customers felt about the environment (Davis et al., 2012; Kleynhans, 2003 & Wilson, 2003).

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Heide and Gronhaug (2006) opined that atmosphere can evoke cognitive, affective, psychological and behavioural reactions on the part of guests whilst Mensah (2009) revealed that ambience and décor can both incite feelings of pleasure and relaxation instead of pressure and anxiety. Primarily, the function of the restaurant is to provide food, however, customers today do not only look up to the food aspect but rather, enhance their quality of life by eating in a better furnished dining environment (Horng, Chou, Liu & Tsai, 2013). Pizam & Ellis (1999) pointed out that when atmosphere possesses unpleasant levels, it is easily seen by customers, such as soiled tables, warm temperature, chipped crockery, loud music, and noisy staff leading to dissatisfaction, and Yoo (2012) concluded that unclean restaurant in addition can breed food borne diseases as well as unsatisfactory meal experience.

The location of food service facility is an important determinant of high patronage of customers. Davis et al. (2012) is of the view that a restaurant can be known for preparing reasonably priced menu with quality service, but if the distance to the premises is two to three miles away from the target population that alone can affect the customer's meal experience. Lewis (1981) and Reynolds and Hwang (2006) emphasize that convenient accessibility to a restaurant influences meal experience, in that, customers arriving by car will expect adequate parking facility, travellers should be able to access the restaurant within a stone throw and the overall location should be safe to enhance meal experience of customers.

Group size and company of people within a restaurant also has an effect on meal experience (Kleynhans, 2003). Eating involved socialising, building or cementing relationships and being in company enhances the

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experience of eating (Brown et al., 2013). Again, Brown et al. (2013) asserted that people feel more satisfied, more contented when they are with friends because of social reinforcement and so having people around to eat with makes you feel more relaxed especially with bonding when it comes to eating together. Barthomeuf, Droit-Volet, and Rousset (2009) also observed that the consumption of food by people who eat in a group changes a person's emotion and enjoyment of the whole experience,

The presence of different customers at the same table has an influence on meal experience. Andersson (1991) indicated that the presence of other customers can make or mar meal experience of diners in different ways such as eating etiquette, type of meal eaten and grooming of other customers. According to Kurtz and Clow (1998:72) "social context can have an impact on the expectations of the dining experience, customers will often have high expectation of food or service when they are with significant others". It was also noted by Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) that the presence of other customers contribute to meal experience in the sense that people always want to impress others through the way they make decisions and choices regarding food selection and its converse can unconsciously affect other diners negatively.

Other miscellaneous activities that can indirectly contribute to meal experience can be the sale of slightly different foods, exhibition of specialty, unique furnishing, branding, and provision of kids' friendly meals, long opening hours and special offer/discounts (Auty, 1992; Huber, 2011; Kim & Chung, 2011). Ismail (2012) aver that the highest level of satisfaction is achieved when outstanding goods or services exhibited surpass the ordinary needs of the customer. Table 1, presents a summary of factors.

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Table 1: Summary of factors that influence meal experience

Name of authors	Factors
Lewis, 1981	Food quality, menu variety, price, atmosphere, and convenience factors.
Barrington & Olsen, 1987	Meal itself and Expectation.
Lewis, 1987; Pizam & Ellis, 1999	Physical goods (food & beverage) behaviour and attitude of employees, physical facilities and environment.
Auty, 1992 (Northern English City)	Food quality, food type, value for money, speed of service, image atmosphere, location, long open hours facilities for children, and recommendation.
Clark & Wood, 1998	Quality of food, price, speed of service and atmosphere.
Clark & Wood, 1999 (Leeuwarden, The Netherlands)	Food & drink, menu types, service, mood & atmosphere
Oh, 2000	Food, service, atmosphere
Cousins et al. 2002	Food & drink, value for money, service, ambience and cleanliness-hygiene.
Kleynhans, 2003 (Lesedi, Cultural village)	Food, service, ambience, good company, other customers
Andersson & Mossberg, 2004 (Gothenburg, Sweden)	Food, fine cuisine, service restaurant interior
Gustafsson, 2004	Food
Gustafsson et al., 2006 (Gothenburg, Sweden)	Food, core items for consumption, Personal service encounter, restaurant scene Atmosphere, environment,
Gustafsson et al. 2006, FAMM (Gothenburg, Sweden)	Product, meeting, room, atmosphere and management control system.
Reynolds & Hwang, 2006 (North Texas, Japan)	Food quality, menu quality, price of value, service, ambience, convenience
Myung, Cool, Feinstein, 2008	Price
Noone et al., 2009 (Kent, U.S.A)	In-process, Pre-process, Post-process
Slake et al. in Pantalidis & Marée, 2009 (Eurochrie)	Quality, cost, speed, dependability & flexibility
Huber, 2011	Provision of slightly different foods, Exhibition of specialty, Branding, Provision of kids friendly meals, Special offer/discount
Davis et al., 2012 (Routledge, New York)	Food & beverage, bill, service quality, atmosphere, mood and complement.
Ismail, 2012 (Malay, Malaysia)	Actual meal, Pre-meal, Post-meal
Yong et al. (2013)	Food quality, service quality and restaurant environment.
Canny, 2014 (Jakarta)	Food quality, physical environment and service quality.

Source: Researcher's summary, 2014

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Post-purchase behavioural intentions

Behavioural intention exhibits itself anytime meal experience takes place and is defined as a stated likelihood where people engage in a behaviour which is the correlation between customers' intention and their actual behaviour (Oliver, 1997). Chen and Chen (2010) defined it as the future behavioural commitment to patronize a product or service. Post-purchase behavioural intention is one main concept which is used to measure the success of an establishment (Oliver, 2010) as a result of positive effect on perceived value and satisfaction of people (Chen & Chen, 2010; Meng, Liang & Yang, 2011). Customer satisfaction which is a determinant of meal experience has a significant mediating role in post-purchase behaviour, such as complaints (alternative intentions), recommendations, and re-visits intention (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). The study by Teng and Kuo (2011) defined re-visit intention as repurchase intention and behaviours that demonstrate one's willingness to recommend and disseminate positive information for a service provided. Recommendation, repurchase and re-visit intentions are again termed as positive consequences of customer satisfaction whilst negative consequences induce alternative intentions and/or complaints (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) revealed that behavioural intentions are expressed in four ways as word of mouth communications, repurchase intention, price sensitivity and complaining behaviour from customers. Han, Back and Barret (2009) stressed that emotions, which is an antecedent of satisfaction, is likely to influence behavioural intentions in the form of re-visits, complaints and recommendations. Baker and Crompton

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(2000) have posited that performance quality has a direct impact on behavioural intentions such as loyalty and willingness to pay more whilst indirect has a negative impact on disloyalty and unwillingness to perform to satisfaction. Zeng, Hu, Chen and Yang (2009) found out that customer behavioural concerns were strongly affected by degrees of satisfaction (in the form of positive comment) and dissatisfaction (in the form of word of mouth criticism). Above all, post-purchase behavioural intention emanates from positive meal experience, perceived value and service quality (Jankingthong & Gonejanart, 2012).

Repeat/regular visits representing one of the post-purchase behavioural intentions is where customers' patronize a restaurant several times in a month (Shock, 2004). A regular/repeat visitor is defined by Vener (2007) as the most desirable patrons who already like a restaurant product and often visit the establishment. These two authors emphasized that before repeat visits gain grounds in a restaurant, there should be positive meal experience which can lead to frequent visit. Reynolds and Hwang (2006) stressed that to maintain repeat visit by customers, restaurant owners must train employees regularly, embark on periodic training of trainers and conduct regular surveys to find out why customers are/aren't patronising the restaurant. In addition, Yong et al. (2013) postulate that repeat visitors are more profitable than new customers' acquisition. Chaudhry (2007) has proven that repeat customers do generate more than twice gross income as compared to new ones whilst Conklin (2006) as cited in Yong et al. (2013) affirm that to gain a new customer is about six times costly than to keep an existing customer.

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Furthermore, Boughton and Fishher (1999) reported that some of the basis for repeat visits as a positive behavioural intention is for the basic reason of enjoying quality food and service. Other factors outlined by Geissler and Rucks (2011), Shock (2004) and Venor (2007) were price of food, type of visit, food (variety, taste, quantity), loyalty programmes and bounce back programmes. Weiner (2000) pointed out that genuine loyal customers were those who attributed service error to uncontrollable factors and therefore stood loyal in spite of dissatisfying experience. Collie, Sparks and Bradley (2000) were of the view that when customers' complaints are remedied professionally, it could motivate customers to come back to the restaurant. Yong et al. (2013) also revealed that out of 191 respondents, 180 representing 94.2% were repeat visitors who patronised fast food restaurant either once or twice a week, whilst Mason, Jones, Benefield and Walton (2013) confirmed this by indicating that out of 125 customers who visited the quick service restaurant, 97.6% visited the restaurant at least once or twice per week.

Recommendation as a determinant of post-purchase behavioural intention is where people endorse a particular restaurant for good deeds. Sariano (2002) is of the view that a customer may recommend a particular restaurant to others whereby he/she has experienced an appreciable customer satisfaction. Again, others recommend even when they have never visited a particular restaurant but have only heard much about it from others. Geissler and Rucks (2011) pointed out that positive word of mouth is one major means by which customers recommend a particular restaurant to others who need a place to eat based on the factors that influence meal experience. Mealey (2013) indicated that recommendations increase the number of people visiting

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restaurants and that promotes growth. Lardinois (2013) also confirmed that through recommendations, there has been an expansion and increase in daily sales in restaurants.

Alternative intention is a post-purchase behavioural intention which exhibits itself whenever a customer is dissatisfied with the entire meal experience (Burnham, Frels & Mahajan, 2003). They further declared that as customers look for alternative intentions, their switching cost increases and they have to spend more time and efforts to compare among the alternatives yet they look elsewhere. In addition, the customer forsakes the time, economic and service relationship which is in the form of special treatment, friendship and other loyalty programmes because of experienced dissatisfaction to get alternatives (Lien & Kao, 2008). It has been discovered that service quality and price perception are drivers of customer retention which affect purchase intention, and whenever these are not met, alternative intentions set in (Ranaweera & Neely, 2003). Again, customers switching behaviour is attributed to the poor perception of the factors that influence meal experience and overall dissatisfaction within a restaurant (Rust & Zahorick, 1993).

Influence of meal experience on post-purchase behavioural intentions

Meal experience plays an important role in predicting behavioural intentions (Ladhari, 2000). Customers remain loyal to a particular restaurant when they enjoy positive meal experience (Hans & Ryu, 2009). In this light, Jani and Hans (2011) opined that, as people enjoy favourable meal experience, they adopt positive post-purchase behavioural intention which includes re-visit and word of mouth intentions (recommendations). Consequently, Hans and

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Ryu (2009) confirmed that previous meal experience results in the formation of an attitude associated with consumers' intention to repurchase and recommend. Again, one construct highly related to behavioural intention is customer satisfaction derived from positive meal experience of a product or service (Oliver, 1999). Report from Ali and Amin (2013) proposed that basic restaurant attributes that contribute to meal experience leading to post dining behavioural intentions were said to be food, service and environment, together with other attributes being price and authenticity. Canny (2014) also confirmed in a conceptual model that food quality, service quality and physical environment all lead to customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Zeithaml et al. (1996) earlier on posited that the link between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intention is very vital because satisfied customers generate high frequency patronage, tend to remain loyal, repurchase product and are willing to pay a premium price for product and services utilized.

According to Canny (2014:25), "every restaurant must find ways to retain and attract new customers, and at the same time restaurants should remain competitive and profitable". It has been confirmed that satisfying customers through positive meal experience is the ultimate goal of businesses because it has a potential implication for repeat purchase behaviour (Jani & Han, 2011; Ryu, Lee & Kim, 2012 & Slatten, Knogh & Connolley, 2011). Mealey (2013) stressed that meal experience can also be enhanced when managers implement changes to engineer the growth of restaurant businesses and diners will periodically enjoy positive meal experience.

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On the contrary, dissatisfied customers take detrimental actions including word of mouth criticisms, switching patronage to other restaurants/boycott and complaining thereby reducing the rate of patronage (Barlow & Moller, 2008; Chauhan & Sharma, 2011). Again, meal experience that leads to alternative intentions occurs when dining experience is professed to be below the anticipated level of expectation (Kasapila, 2006). Gursoy, McCleary, & Lepsito (2003) emphasized that most dissatisfied customers choose not to complain directly to restaurant manager but quietly look for alternatives. In summary, the influence of meal experience on post-purchase behavioural intentions should be of great concern to all restaurant managers because the effect can make/mar the growth of restaurants.

Theoretical framework

Some theoretical frameworks adopted for the research were, dining satisfaction and return patronage model (Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece, 1999), consumer expectations model (Kleynhans, 2003) and dinescape scale model (Ryu & Han, 2010). Two other models namely the stomach contraction model (Coon, 1995) and decision theory (Hansson, 1994) were also used to describe physiological and convenience reasons for eating out respectively. Finally, a conceptual framework for measuring customers' meal experience and its effect on post-purchase behavioural intentions was derived from the above.

Dining satisfaction and return patronage model

Kivela et al. (1999) proposed a conceptual model that explained dining satisfaction and predicted post-dining behavioural intentions (Figure 1). It

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conceptualizes and describes the effect of disconfirmation on individual's dining and post-dining experiences. Oh and Joeng (1996) discovered that there is disconfirmatory effects on how meal satisfaction affects post-dining behavioural intentions, that is whether a customer will return or not. Oh and Joeny (1996) and Qu (1997) identified the importance of customer satisfaction, whilst theories in relation to service was propounded by Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) then food by John and Tyas (1996). Webster (1991) opined that making decisions is based on outcomes of a specific action. Furthermore, positive disconfirmation occurs if the product or service is better than expected and vice versa. Disconfirmation theory is widely accepted as a stage where customers develop feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (kivela et al., 1999).

The model is made up of inputs and output variables (Finkelstein, 1989b). The inputs outlined customer characteristics (eg. age and gender), dining out and situational constraints (eg. money and time) and dining occasion (eg social and business). These internal inputs were of great importance because they represented some of the reasons for eating out. Again, Kivela et al. (1999) pointed out that dining occasion and dining out stimulate behaviour and subsequent customer experience.

The external inputs represented the restaurant attributes in the form of food, service, atmosphere, convenience and restaurant attribute itself. These attributes equally play a role in the overall dining experience of a customer. Process variables are concerned with customers' dining expectations emanating from the combination of internal and external input variables. Output variables resulted from the combination of input and process variables

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to give the actual dining experience being the consequence of disconfirmation. Also, the model highlights on customers post-dining behaviour which provides feedback for future dining decisions (Lowenstein, 1995 & Oh & Joeng 1996).

internal & external inputs   **process**   **output**
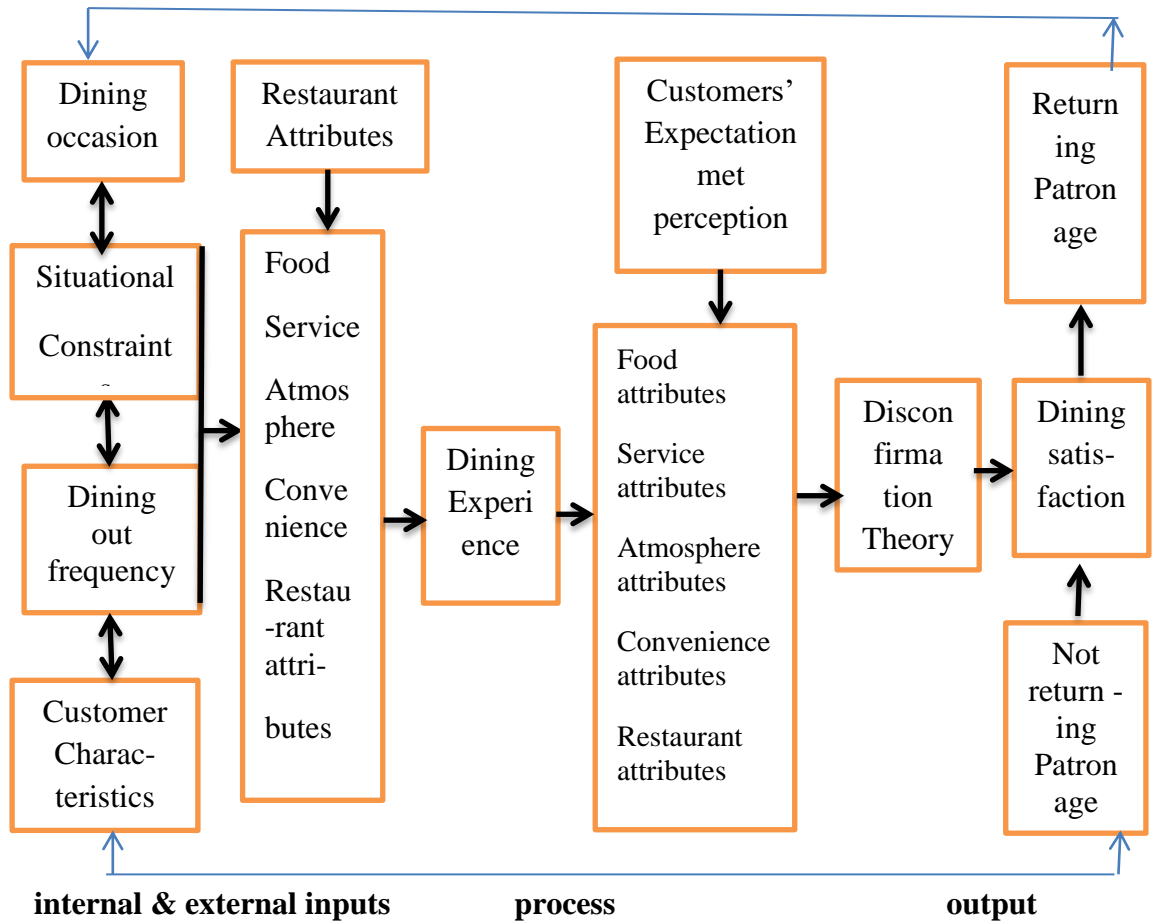
Figure 1. **Dining satisfaction and return patronage model**

Source: Kivela et al. (1999)

Finally, dining satisfaction leading to the disconfirmation theory is viewed as dining satisfaction/dissatisfaction thereby exhibiting returning patronage or not returning patronage. However, one vital attribute like price of food that influences dining experience was not present in the model. At the latter part of the model, no detailed effect was outlined to depict dining

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satisfaction/dissatisfaction although there is a link from the output variables to the input variables.

Consumer expectations model

Kleynhans (2003) diagrammatic model on consumer expectations is described under four main themes .(figure 2). They are product/food, internal/consumer characteristics, external/context restaurant attributes and expectations. Food consumed in a restaurant along with service and atmosphere provides total meal experience. Kleynhans (2003) established the components of meal experience and the significant relationship that existed among food, service and atmosphere.

Product/ Food	**Internal/ Consumer Characteristics**	**External/ Context Restaurant Attributes**	
SENSORY ASPECT OF THE FOOD. Presentation Aroma Taste of food Temperature Types of food Food quality Food authenticity	DEMOGRAPHICS Age, gender, nationality KNOWLEDGE Authentic food and local cultures PRIOR DINING EXPERIENCE	SERVICE Friendly Polite Helpful Attentive Efficient Atmosphere	Expectations

Figure 2: **Consumer expectations model**

Source: Kleynhans (2003).

The researcher stated that product, context and the individual characteristics help to meet customer expectations. The model referred to

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product as food (taste, presentation, aroma, food quality, variety and authenticity), internal characteristics as demographics, knowledge and prior dining experience and external/context as restaurant attributes in the form of service and atmosphere/ambience.

Mckee and Harden (1990) refer to sensory attributes as the first factor. Consumers assess presentation/appearance and aroma of food before they eat, and as they experience it, they also assess the taste, quality, authenticity and temperature while eating (Bell & Meiselman, 1995; Mckee & Harden, 1990). Kleynhans (2003) indicated that the snapshot of service experienced by a consumer has a significant impact on individual perceptions. Pizam and Ellis (1999) and Tsai (2001) affirmed that the display of positive emotions of service attitudes as seen in the diagrammatic model contributes to consumer satisfaction, therefore, consumers always have a prior dining experience in terms of what they want plus their socio demographics acting as an internal decision maker. Oliver (1981) and Oh (2000) found out that consumers decide to patronize a restaurant again only when their expectations are met.

Kleynhans (2003) model indicated that food, demographics, prior dining experience, service and atmosphere all contribute to customer expectation. In comparism, Clark and Wood (1999) also have two main dimensions termed as tangible (food) and intangible (service and atmosphere). The internal consumer characteristics describe the importance of what motivates people to eat. Food, service and atmosphere outlined by Kleynhans (2003) were confirmed as factors that influence meal experience (Anderson and Mossberg, 2004; Davis et al., 2012; Gustafsson et al., 2006 and Oh, 2000).

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However, the model does not bring forward the outcome of expectations whether it results in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Also, the model does not provide details on what constitute prior dining experience. Calverts (2001) was of the view that apart from the three key factors, customers were also influenced by people, their personality and mood. This indicates that apart from the service staff, group size and other customers are also factors that constitute meal experience (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004) together with menu, location and price of food (Auty, 1992 & Reynolds & Hwang, 2006).

Dinescape scale model

Ryu and Han (2010) conceptualized the model to examine how customers' perceptions of physical environment influence disconfirmation, as well as customer satisfaction and loyalty for first time and repeat customers. The model as shown in Figure 3, used a structural equation analysis which exhibited facility aesthetics, lighting, layout, ambience, table setting and social factors. In Ryu and Han (2010) unscale restaurants, customers also sense the physical pleasant setting of a restaurant, apart from food and service which is able to determine the degree of overall customer satisfaction and loyalty to a large extent (Han & Ryu, 2009; & Kim & Moon, 2009). To capture how customers perceived the physical environment, dinescape scale was used which is made up of the six dimensions above (Ryu & Jang, 2008).

In Ryu and Han (2010) conceptual model, facility aesthetics attract and maintain customers. Lighting represent most powerful stimuli in the restaurant, whilst ambience represents intangible background characteristics

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that have subconscious effect on customers. Layout is the manner in which objects are arranged and social factors are the people (employees and customers). Tombs and McColl-kennedy (2003) claimed that customer affection, cognitive responses and repurchase intentions are all related to social factors.
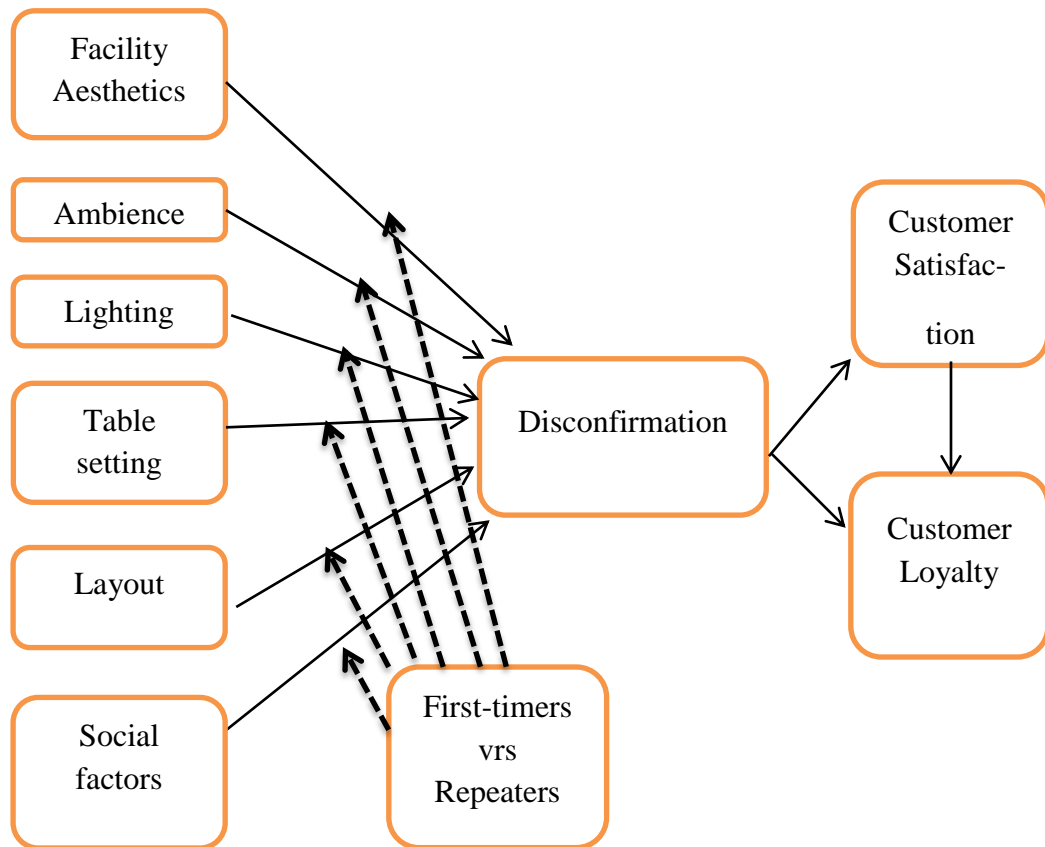
Figure 3: **Dinescape scale model**

Source: Ryu & Han (2010).

According to Oliver (1997:28) disconfirmation is "a psychological interpretation of an expectation performance discrepancy". Positive disconfirmation leads to enhanced satisfaction. It also has a direct influence on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Molinan, Abratt and Dion (2008) postulated that positive disconfirmation derived by customers lead to satisfaction and

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loyalty. Petrick (2002) affirms that first timers and repeaters have links with disconfirmation.

The six dimensions as seen in the model above are determinants of disconfirmation and has direct influence on what leads to customer satisfaction. It is obvious and of great merit to note that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty. One weakness that can be observed from the model is that customer loyalty is not the only way in which customers exhibit satisfaction. Instead, there should have been other variables depicting what happens when customers attain satisfaction. Finally, there was no information on what happens when customers are dissatisfied.

Conceptual Framework for the study.

The model below is the proposed conceptual framework for the study. It is based on dining satisfaction and return patronage model, consumer expectations model and dinescape scale model.
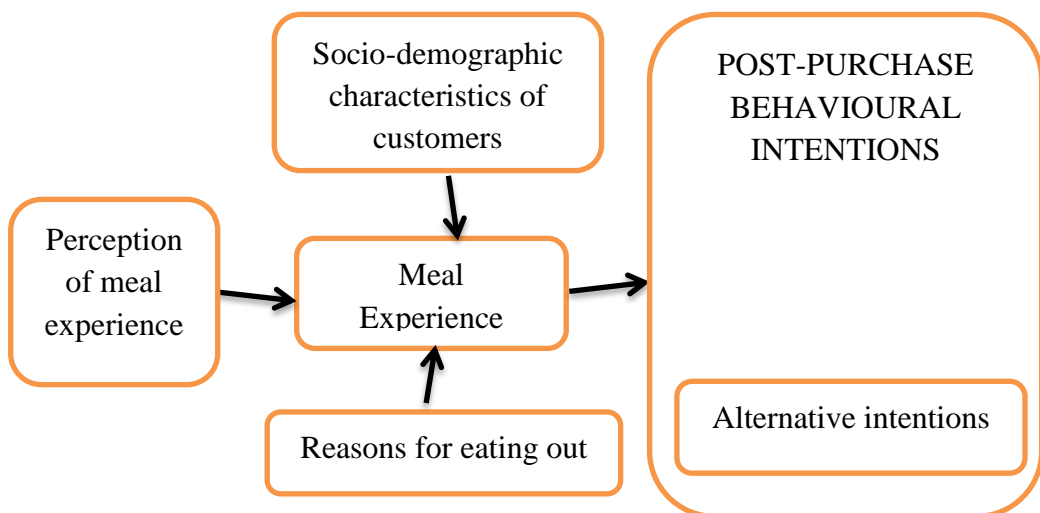
Figure 4. **Effect of meal experience on post-purchase behavioural intentions model.**

Source: Adapted from Kivela et al. (1999); Kleynhans (2003) & Ryu & Hans (2010)

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The model has three sets of independent variables that meal experience depends on. They are perceptions of meal experiences, socio-demographic characteristics and reasons for eating out. The theoretical frameworks reviewed also outlined some factors that influence meal experience with key determinants being food, menu, price, service and atmosphere. The meal experience could result in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction described as post-purchase behavioural intention.

Baker and Crompton (2000) and Eggert and Ulaga (2002) posit that customer satisfaction leads to re-visit intention and recommendation. On the contrary, Gursoy et al (2003) also revealed that when customers are dissatified, they boycott a restaurant patronage indicating that an alternative intention has taken place.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the meal experience, reasons for eating out and its influence on the meal experience. It also reviewed customers perceptions of the meal experiences and factors that influence meal experience. Post-purchase behavioural intentions describing the end result of a person's meal experience was reviewed as well. Finally, models adopted for the study were Kivela et al (1999), Kleynhans (2003) and Ryu & Hans (2010).

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the study area, research philosophy, research design, sources of data and target population. It also explains sampling procedures as well as instruments used in collecting and analysing data on how the fieldwork was conducted to the context of the study. In addition, it accounts for detailed matters arising from the fieldwork.

Study area

The study was conducted in Sekondi-Takoradi which is situated within the Shama Ahanta East Metropolis (S.A.E.M). It is the Twin City of the Western Region of Ghana. Sekondi-Takoradi is the Western Region's largest city. It is an industrial and commercial center and has a population of 445,205 people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Sekondi is the oldest and largest of the two cities and is the site of Dutch Fort Orange (1642) and English Fort Sekondi (1682). It also prospered from the railroad which was built in 1903. Takoradi is the site of Dutch Fort Witsen (1665) and a port city.

The city is currently named Oil City of Ghana (although not official) due to the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the Region. This has attracted lots of investors and people from all over the world (http://www.stma.gov.gh/). Industries like Tullow Oil Company and Seaweld Engineering have also sprung up as a result of the oil discovery. An educational institution named Jubilee Technical Training Centre has also been established at Takoradi Polytechnic and it is currently training students for the

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oil industry. The twin city further boasts of an increase in hotels and restaurants situated mostly along the beaches. This increase is partly due to the influx of people into the city as a result of the oil find and the need for most to be accommodated and adequately fed. Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis has Mpohor Wassa East, Ahanta West, Shama and Gulf of Guinea as its boundaries.
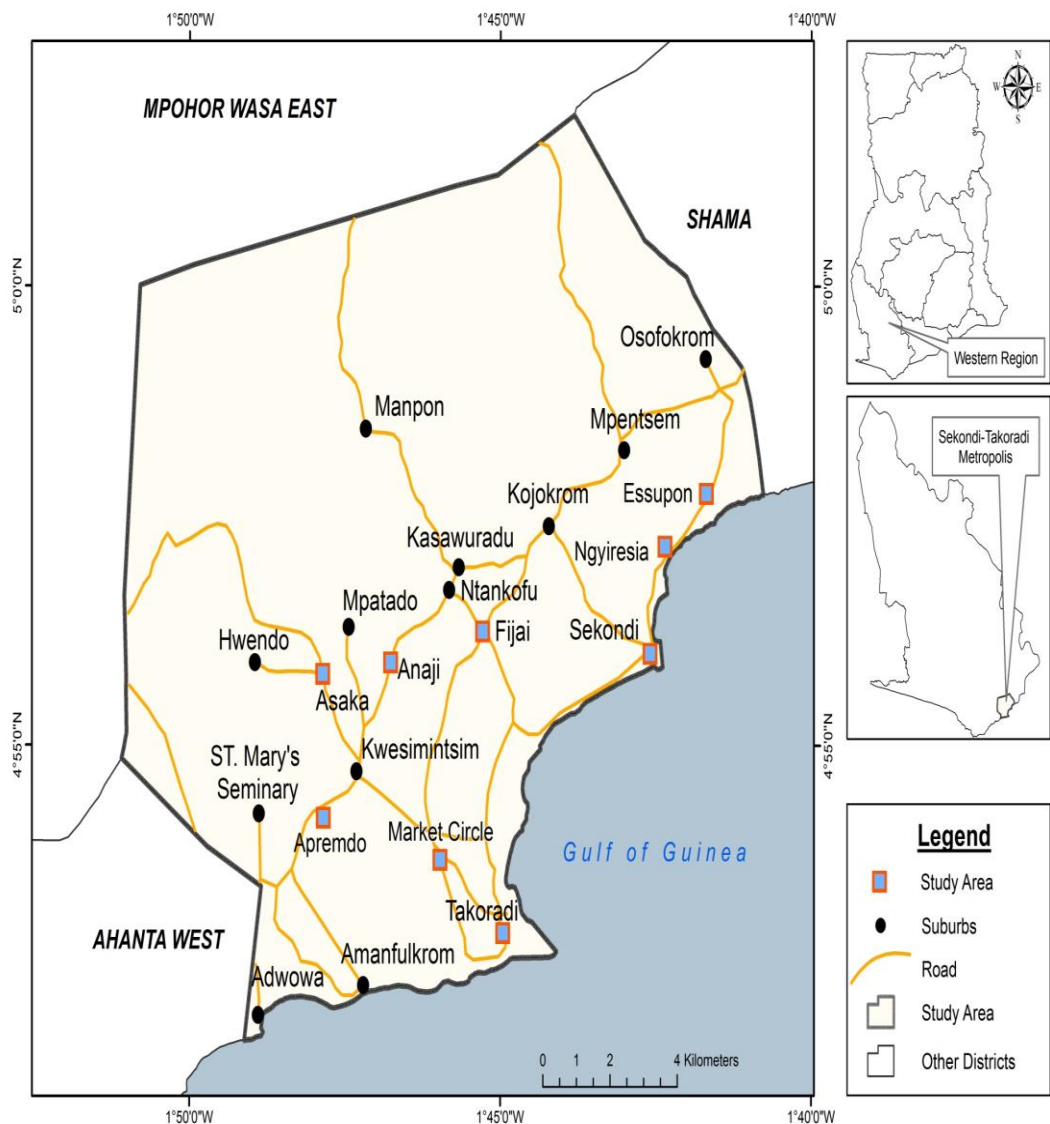
Figure 5: **Map of study area; Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis**.

Source: Cartography Unit, Department of Geography & Regional Planning,

University of Cape Coast (2013)

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Research philosophy

A research philosophy is a belief about the manner in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. This research made use of the positivism approach (quantitative). The positivism approach is based on realization through experience which aims at explaining social life that has a long and rich historical tradition suitable for social sciences (Galliers, 1991; Sarantakos, 2005). Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint (Levin, 1988). Positivists advance that many decisions are made throughout the research based on objective verification decisions (Hopkins, 2000).

Quantitative research on the other hand refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena (Payne & Payne, 2005). The goal is to collect numerical data and produce general statements or laws which hold across a range of contexts (Yates, 2004). Again, the researcher was concerned with being able to say that the finding(s) could be generalized beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted (Ofori & Dampson, 2011), thus the adoption of this approach. In quantitative research, the aim is to determine the relationship between one thing (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable) in a population (Hopkins, 2000).

Research design

A research design encompasses the method and procedures employed in scientific research. In social science research, two fundamental types of research designs, that is descriptive and explanatory, are mostly used (Pelhan

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& Blanton, 2006). The selection of an appropriate design is based on the topic as well as what the research aims to achieve. It entails a detailed work-plan which ensures that evidences obtained are useful in answering questions, testing theories, evaluating programmes or describing a phenomenon.

The Cross-sectional survey was used for this study. It is a non-experimental and an explanatory research design. Non-experimental research is a research that is not investigational (Driscoll, 2011). Explanatory research design focuses on why certain things happen, what information is collected, be it simple or complex, in order to develop causal explanations on why one thing affects the other (Driscoll, 2011; Ofori & Dampson, 2011).

The cross-sectional survey entails the study of either the entire population or a subset of it. It has three distinctive features: no time dimension, a reliance on existing differences rather than change following intervention, and selection of groups based on existing differences (Barrat & Kirwan, 2009). It is called cross-sectional because the information about x and y that are gathered represent what is going on at only one point in time. This approach is also used to determine whether there is a relationship between two things, between two factors or the effect of x on y (Lavrakas, 2008; Ofori & Dampson, 2011; Olsen & Marie, 2004).

In this study, the cross-sectional survey was employed because it aided the researcher to assess the relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions. Again, it was used to investigate multiples of outcomes and also permitted the researcher to collect information quickly (Creasey, 2006; Miller, 2006). The study adopted this approach because the recommendations will be useful all year round.

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Sources of data

Data relating to reasons for eating out, perceptions of meal experiences and post-purchase behavioural intentions of customers were needed to achieve the study objectives. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaires for people who dine out in grade three restaurants in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. Secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished documents such as books, journals, articles, internet, records from managers and waiters/waitress of some grade three restaurants and the Ghana Tourism Authority.

Population and sampling procedure

It was practically impossible to extract information from all diners seen in the restaurants. There was therefore the need to adopt the appropriate sample for the study. An essential issue of determining the sample size of any study is its representativeness. This was done with time, resources and proposed plan of work in mind. The target population for the study comprised all people who dine out in grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi during the month of February, 2014.

According to GTA (2013), there is grade one, two and three registered restaurants scattered all over Sekondi-Takoradi. Sampling all restaurants for the survey was too demanding. Therefore grade one and two (which was only two each in the study) were not utilized, but all 20 registered grade three restaurants in the Twin City were purposively selected for the study.

Initially, all the grade three restaurants that were purposively selected were visited in order to solicit information concerning their monthly and daily

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average customer expectations. Information gathered from restaurant managers indicated that averagely, diners expected ranged from 27-100 per day depending on their location, price and type(s) of food served.

As a result, a disproportionate allocation made up of 25% of each restaurant's average daily intake within a month was calculated in order to ensure that there was some level of equity. This calculation was done using the Raosoft online sample size calculation, at 80% response rate and 95% degree of confidence meaning that it has a 5% margin of error. Population size = 1011, @ Response rate of = 80% resulted in a commended sample size = **198**.

Table 2: Raosoft online sample size calculation

Grade three restaurants in Sekondi / Takoradi.	Average daily customer expectation	Disproportionate allocation (25% of each restaurant daily intake or more)	% per restaurant
1.	88	22	8.53
2.	47	12	4.65
3.	40	10	3.88
4.	40	10	3.88
5.	53	13	5.04
6.	60	15	5.81
7.	40	10	3.88
8.	27	7	2.71
9.	100	25	9.69
10.	73	18	6.98
11.	53	13	5.04
12.	49	12	4.65
13.	53	13	5.04
14.	60	15	5.81
15.	47	12	4.65
16.	40	10	3.87
17.	27	7	2.71
18.	40	10	3.88
19.	27	7	2.71
20.	67	17	6.59
Total Population = 1011		Total = 258	100

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Furthermore, the sample size required for accuracy in estimating proportions formula was used. This was done by considering the standard normal deviation set at 1.96 which corresponds to 95% confidence level, percentage picking a choice or response was 50% which is equal to 0.5, and the confidence interval was $(0.05 = \pm 5)$.

Formula for calculating accuracy in estimating proportions

$$n = \frac{z^2(p)(1-p)}{c^2}$$

Where: z = standard normal deviation set at 95% confidence level

p = percentage picking a choice of response

c = confidence interval

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \, (0.5) \, (1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$$
$$\frac{1.96^2 \, (0.5) \, (0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$\frac{3.84 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$\frac{0.96}{0.0025} \qquad \mathbf{n = 384}$$

The final sample size was got from the sum of accuracy in estimating proportions plus recommended sample size divided by two

$$\frac{384+198}{2} \qquad = \mathbf{291} \text{ (Sample size)}$$

Sampling techniques

The study adopted the purposive and convenience sampling techniques that are classified as non-probability sampling technique. A purposive sample was selected based on the knowledge of population and purpose of the study. It was very useful since there was a need to reach the targeted population

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sample quickly, sampling for proportionality was not the main concern (Babbie, 2007; Ofori & Dampson, 2011). The main goal was to focus on particular characteristics of a population that were of interest and that would best answer the research questions. In this context, total population sampling which is a type of purposive technique was used because all twenty grade three restaurants on record were used (Babbie, 2007 & GTA, 2013).

Furthermore, purposive sampling technique was being selected because the study used grade three restaurants alone and they possessed certain features which identified them as a group. Grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi were purposively selected because the Metropolis had twenty of its kind which number was manageable. Again, a comparison based on the adoption of this technique would be uniform for analysis since all respondents are likely to be exposed to similar factors that influence their meal experiences in terms of food, price, menu, service, atmosphere amongst others.

Convenience sampling allows any subject available to participate in a study. This type of sampling is convenient, less costly and less time-consuming. It also has a high participation rate and its outcome represents an appreciable representation of the population (Babbie, 2007; Ofori & Dampson, 2011; Sarantakos, 2005).

The researcher personally visited all the twenty grade three restaurants within the month of February, 2014. For each restaurant visited, the researcher conveniently selected customers who were patronising the facility. In some restaurants, more questionnaires were administered because those restaurants' average daily intakes exceeded the figures estimated/calculated to be used for

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the study. This also helped to cater for the differences accrued after the final sample size was got. The selection of respondents was done solely by the use of the researcher's discretion. This approach was used because it is widely believed that in convenience sampling, the researcher has the single honour authorization to select respondents for the study. Again about 75% of the questionnaires were filled by customers, whilst the remaining 25% were filled for the respondents by the researcher. This help was given to those who were illiterates because the questions had to be translated before the respondents provided answers to be written down on their behalf. Others also claim that their hand writings were not easy to read, whilst others were just lazy to write, hence the assistance.

Data collection instrument

The survey method (cross-survey) that conforms to the positivist tradition was utilised to question respondents in order to gather information. The standardised questioning procedure aimed at studying the relationship among variables was basically for the collection of quantifiable data by the use of a semi-structured questionnaire (Bryman, 2004). A questionnaire is an instrument which contains a set of questions; submitted to people to statistically gain quantifiable information for research (Twumasi, 2001).

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) consisted of a mixture of open-ended questions, close-ended questions, yes/no, a 5-point Likert scale and a 5-point scale for assessment preference. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections. The first section (A) was first considered with identifying reasons that made respondents visit the restaurants they were found at the time of the

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visit. Again, this section looked at customers' perceptions of their meal experiences. For this domain, respondents' were expected to indicate their extent of preference using a 5-point Likert scale. On the scale, 1 represented strongly disagree (SD), 2 represented disagree (D), 3 represented neutral (N), 4 represented agree (A) and 5 represented strongly agree (SA). Again, an assessment scale of 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good and 5=excellent was utilized to rate respondents' personal meal experiences in the restaurant.

The second section (B) sought data on the effect of meal experiences on post- purchase behavioural intentions by the use of a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents also indicated whether they were first timers or repeat visitors using yes/no options as well as stating the number of times they visited that particular restaurant within a week. Furthermore, respondents were also allowed to offer advice to management towards the improvement of meals.

The last section (C) sought data on respondents' socio demographic characteristics. These were sex, age, and marital status, level of education, employment status, monthly income and religion.

Pre-testing/Preliminary survey

The questionnaire was pre-tested on the 5th of February, 2014. Twenty (20) respondents were purposively selected from four grade three restaurants in Cape Coast. Cape Coast was chosen because it is widely known that the city is the hub of Tourism in Ghana. The convenience sampling technique was used to select five respondents each from the four restaurants around Pedu, Siwdu, Town Hall and Castle areas. These areas were selected because their restaurants operated throughout the day.

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This pilot survey helped the researcher to assess the viability of the survey instrument. After collecting the data, the questionnaires were analysed to assess whether they were effective and informative. Concerns raised by the respondents were also duly noted. After the pre-testing, the necessary modifications were made, before the actual fieldwork (distribution and collection of questionnaire) began.

Data collection procedures

The fieldwork commenced from 14th February, 2014 and ended on 28th of February, 2014. Advanced bookings through phone calls were purposively made to the grade three restaurants in order to seek official permission from managers before visiting the premises. For others, permission was sought in person.

The distribution of the questionnaires took place each day between the hours of 11.00a.m to 4.00p.m for twelve restaurants, 6.30p.m to 10.00p.m for six restaurants and then from 12.00 midday to 8.30p.m for two restaurants on weekends. The time schedule varied because the managers wanted the questionnaire to be distributed during their peak periods. The researcher also concurred because those times permitted the utilization of convenience sampling.

Seventeen out of twenty restaurant managers requested a sample of the questionnaire, assessed it before final approval was given for administration to begin. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents, and were personally retrieved by the researcher. Out of the, 291 questionnaires administered, 272 were retrieved, representing a high response rate of 93.5%.

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Problems encountered on the field

Two restaurant managers openly prevented the researcher from administering questionnaire in their restaurants explaining that it will disturb their customers. However, two grade three restaurants had other branches therefore visits were made to those places to make up for the twenty restaurants needed.

Also, the reluctance to complete questionnaires was common because some respondents were in a rush. Others too were just not willing to partake, whilst some stated that the questionnaire was too long. In spite of all these encumbrances, the researcher managed to convince diners by telling them of the importance of the study. This subsequently made the data collection easier.

Ethical issues

The research considered some ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. During the administration of the questionnaires respondents were not coerced nor paid for the services rendered. Neuman (2007) affirms that going contrary to prior statement was unethical and so informed consent was first sought from restaurant managers, and respondents voluntarily participated by answering the questionnaire at the restaurant.

Secondly, anonymity, as explained by Babbie, (2009) is the provision of privacy whereby respondent's identity is guaranteed. This was the reason why respondents' names were not written as well as the name of restaurants visited. Finally, confidentiality was ensured since the researcher did not share or discuss any information to a third party.

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Data analysis

The quantitative data collected were coded and analysed using the Statistical Product for Service Solution (S.P.S.S.) version 17. Specifically, percentages, frequencies, tables, cross-tabulations, means and standard deviations were used to analyse the data.

Other statistical tools such as chi square (χ^2) and logistic regression were used. Chi square was used to test hypotheses at $p < 0.05$ for established association between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics, as well as meal experience. Again, χ^2 was used to test the relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions. Logistic regression was also employed to measure the relationship between the dependent variable (y), that is, meal experience and the independent variables (x) which are customers' socio-demographic characteristics and perceptionss of the meal experience. These tools were used to analyse these data because of their proven effectiveness in food-related research.

Summary

This chapter focused on methodology required for the study and the procedures used for the data collection. It focused on the research philosophy, research design, sources of data, population and sampling procedure, sampling techniques, data collection instrument, pre-test, data collection procedures, problems encountered on the field as well as ethical issues. The latter part described how the data was analysed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion, specifically on socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, reasons for eating out, customers' perceptions of their meal experiences, factors that influence meal experiences, as well as post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents have been found to be relevant to their satisfaction, experience and purchase (Engel et al., 1995; Kaura, 2011). The socio-demographic characteristics considered were sex, age, and marital status, level of education, employment status, monthly income and religion. Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of customers. Respondents were made up of 74.4% males and 25.6% females. Traditionally, people frown on females who eat out in restaurants apart from going out on a date, hence the low patronage.

The age of the respondents ranged between 20 to 68 years with the average age being 44 years. About 40.4% were less than 30 years, followed by those between the ages of 31-50 years (50.2%) with only 9.4% aged 51 years or more. Thus half of the respondents' ages were centred between 31 – 50 years.

Regarding marital status, more than half (62.5%) of the respondents were married whilst 37.5% were single. With respect to level of education, the respondents were generally well educated with 81.9% having completed

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tertiary level education as against 3.7% and 1.4% who had acquired basic and

no formal education respectively.

Table 3: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	201	74.4
Female	69	25.6
Total	272	100.0
Age		
<30	103	40.4
30-50	128	50.2
50+	24	9.4
Total	255	100.0
Marital status		
Single	101	37.5
Ever married	168	62.5
Total	269	100.0
Level of education		
No formal education	2	0.7
Basic	10	3.7
Secondary	37	13.7
Tertiary	221	81.9
Total	270	100.0
Employment status		
Employed	164	60.3
Self employed	70	25.7
Unemployment	38	14.0
Total	272	100.0
Monthly income		
<GH¢ 300	13	5.8
GH¢ 300 - 899	56	24.9
GH¢ 900 - 1,499	53	23.6
GH¢ 1,500.00+	103	45.8
Total	225	100.0
Religion		
Christian	251	93.7
Islam/Muslims	12	4.5
Traditional	2	0.7
No religion	2	1.1
Total	267	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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For employment status, 60.3% were employed by others, 25.7% were self-employed and 14% were unemployed. Pertaining to their monthly incomes, 45.8% earned Gh¢1,500.00 and above whilst only 5.8% earned less than Gh¢ 300.00. For religion, an overwhelming majority of respondents were Christians (93.7%) whilst only 4.5% were Muslims.

Reasons for eating out

Customers' main reason for eating out varied depending on the individual motivations (Jones, 2002; Warde & Martens, 2000). The results indicated that there were six reasons for eating out by respondents' namely - physiological, social, esteem, convenience, business and health reasons. Figure 6 shows that 28.1% ate out solely for convenience reasons, 23.3% for physiological reasons and 22.5% for esteem needs. The other reasons were social needs (17.3%), health (8%) and business purposes (0.8%).
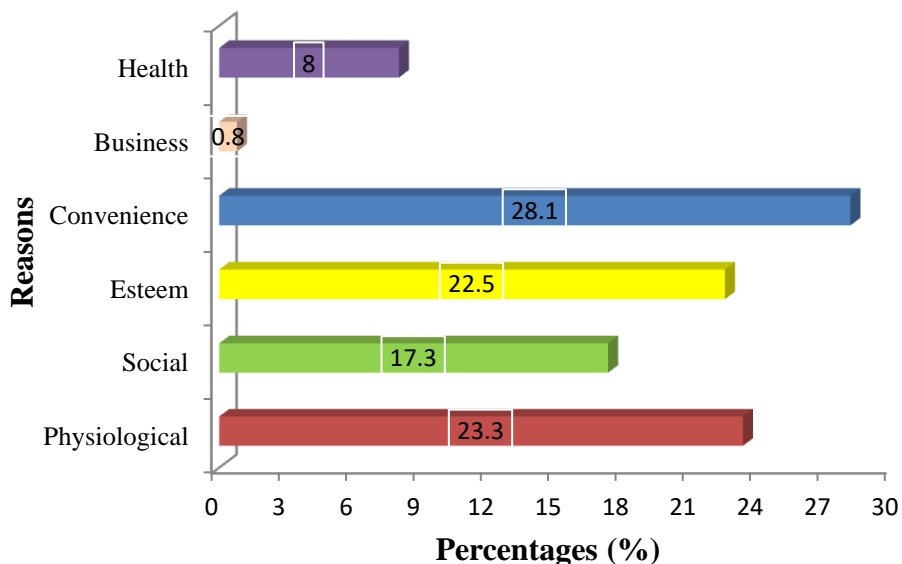
Figure 6: Reasons for eating out

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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For those who ate out for convenience reasons, the specific reasons included the fact that the restaurant was close to their places of work so they spent little time and effort to get to the restaurant for food. This finding is in consonance with the posits of Davis et al. (2012) and Ismail (2012) who found out in New York and Malaysia that eating out was solely for convenience as well as saving time and energy needed for cooking.

Pertaining to the finding that physiological need ranked second on respondents' reasons for dining out, naturally, people have to eat in order to grow as well as to survive. Hence, physiological need is one core reason for eating out. The stomach contraction theory (Coon, 1995) indicates that people have to eat to increase their insulin levels because glucose level will be low, and, also, the stomach contracts when a person is hungry. This is in line with the physiological/biological reason for eating out whereby people basically visit restaurants because they are hungry, and it is so convenient, service is quick and it is easy to get food during lunch time in restaurants (Hitti, 2008). This means that once people are hungry, they look out for food to eat in restaurants.

Reasons for eating out by socio-demographic characteristics of customers

Chi-square statistic was employed to examine the relationship between respondents' reasons for eating out and their socio-demographic characteristics. The results as shown in Table 4, indicate that there is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Evidently, at degree of freedom (*df*-16), the χ^2 table value at a significant level of 0.05 is 26.296. Since the calculated χ^2 of all

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the socio-demographic characteristics (sex -0.133, age - 0.923, marital status - 0.712, level of education - 0.880, employment status - 0.097 and monthly income - 0.398) were less than the χ^2 table value of 26.296, it shows that there is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents could not be rejected. However, some interesting patterns were observed.

Contrary to the results of this study, previous studies below have provided various ways in which reasons for eating out had a link with socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Stewart et al. (2004) stated that people with higher monthly household income spend significantly more on food away from home. Reynolds and Hwang (2005) also described that generation X, that is those born from (1965-1976) and Y (1977-1994), were noted for frequent eating. However, this study identified that there is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

Generally, more females than males patronised the grade three restaurants for physiological, social and health reasons, whilst a greater percentage of males ate out for convenience, esteem and business reasons. Also, respondents aged 50 years and below were noted to eat out for convenience, social and business reasons. However, those aged 51 years and above mainly ate out for physiological and esteem reasons. Almost an equal percentage of customers who were single (27.8%) and ever married (27.6%) ate out for convenience reasons and also for physiological and esteem reasons.

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Table 4: Reasons for eating out by socio-demographic characteristics of customers

Socio-demographic characteristics	N=272	Physio-logical	Social	Esteem	Conve-nience	Busi-ness	Health	χ^2, p-value
Sex								
Male	201	22.3	14.4	23.4	31.4	1.1	7.4	8.450[a]
Female	69	25.4	27.1	18.6	18.6	0.0	10.2	(0.133)
Age								
<30 years	103	19.3	18.2	21.6	29.5	1.1	10.2	4.488[a]
31-50	128	23.6	17.9	25.2	27.6	8.0	4.9	(0.923)
51+	24	31.8	13.6	22.7	22.7	0.0	9.1	
Marital status								
Single	101	23.3	15.6	22.2	27.8	0.0	11.1	2.919[a]
Ever married	168	23.7	17.9	23.1	27.6	1.3	6.4	(0.712)

Table 4, continued

Level of education

No formal education	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.950ᵃ
Basic	10	50.0	16.7	0.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	(0.880)
Secondary	37	17.6	23.5	20.6	29.4	0.0	8.8	
Tertiary	221	23.3	16.5	23.8	27.2	1.0	8.3	

Employment status

Employed	164	25.5	14.4	23.5	25.5	1.3	9.8	16.094ᵃ
Self-employed	70	20.3	23.4	15.6	35.9	0.0	4.7	(0.097)
Unemployed	38	0.0	30.0	50.0	10.0	0.0	10.0	

Monthly income

<Gh¢300.00	13	23.1	23.1	15.4	38.5	0.0	0.0	15.762ᵃ
¢301-899.00	56	20.8	12.5	33.3	18.8	2.1	12.5	(0.398)
¢900-1,499.	53	21.2	23.1	17.3	25.0	1.9	11.5	
Gh¢1,500 +	103	25.8	16.5	21.6	32.0	0.0	4.1	

Significant level (≤ 0.05) Degree of freedom (*df* 16)

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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Profiling their level of education and reasons for eating out, all the respondents (100%) with no formal education and 50% with basic education ate out for physiological reasons. However, close to 30% of customers with secondary and tertiary education mostly ate out for convenience reasons. Again, as those with secondary education further ate out for social and esteem reasons, close to a quarter of the respondents with tertiary education ate out for esteem and physiological reasons.

Also, the results as indicated in Table 4, shows that half (50%) of the unemployed respondents ate out for esteem reasons, whilst the self-employed (35.9%) and employed (25.5%) ate out for convenience reasons. With regard to monthly income and reasons for eating out, more than a third of those who earn Gh¢300.00 and Gh¢1,500 and above ate out for convenience reasons. Respondents who earn between Gh¢300-899.00 ate out for esteem reasons whilst a quarter of the respondents who earned between Gh¢900-1,499 also ate out for convenience reasons.

Customers' perceptions of the meal experience

As a socially constructed term, perception of customers' meal experience was assessed by using a five-point Likert scale. Specifically, the section analysed customers' perceptions of the meal experience based on their perception of food, menu, price, service and atmosphere. Customers' perceived the meal experience to be good because all the factors had an overall mean score greater than 3 (mean > 3.00). The specific means were food (mean = 3.88), menu (mean = 3.77), price (mean = 3.77), service (mean = 3.67) and atmosphere (mean = 3.60).

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Table 5: Customers' perceptions of the meal experience

Perception	% in agreement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perception of food (overall mean=3.88)			
Food is attractive	71.7	3.87	0.762
Food is tasty	76.7	3.90	0.792
Food has good quality	72.4	3.90	0.84
Food quantity is sufficient	71.5	3.82	0.986
Food has pleasant aroma	72.0	3.86	0.812
Food temperature is right	76.9	4.00	0.816
Food is nutritious	67.3	3.82	0.806
Food is healthy	74.2	3.90	0.796
Perception of menu (overall mean=3.77)			
Menu has variety	73.0	3.77	1.015
Menu is easy to understand	71.9	3.76	1.053
Menu chosen was available	77.1	3.88	0.993
Menu has different prices	71.6	3.85	0.993
Dishes described to diners	62.7	3.59	1.079
Perception of price (overall mean=3.77)			
Price of food is reasonable	72.3	3.79	1.060
Price is fair	68.4	3.75	1.011
Price has value for money	67.8	3.76	1.009
Perception of service (overall mean=3.67)			
Staff welcome customers	59.3	3.58	1.157
Staff are polite	79.0	3.95	0.776
Staff exhibit professionalism	55.8	3.51	0.942
Staff are knowledgeable	57.3	3.56	0.825
Service is prompt	53.0	3.41	1.117
Staff do not discriminate	66.3	3.73	0.935
Staff are helpful	69.4	3.82	0.829
Staff make customers' special	56.2	3.54	0.955
Properly handled complaints	53.3	3.50	0.942
Staff are decently dressed	76.2	3.90	0.916
Requested food was served	73.7	3.89	0.958
Environment (overall mean=3.60)			
Adequate parking space	51.1	3.27	1.273
Restaurant easily accessible	79.4	3.39	0.911
Environment is safe	73.9	3.87	0.931
Restaurant is clean	73.5	3.84	0.848
Restaurant has pleasant smell	69.5	3.79	0.787
Restaurant is spacious	54.8	3.41	1.09
Restaurant nicely decorated	59.2	3.63	0.881
Restaurant is not noisy	66.9	3.74	0.984
Clean cutlery and crockery	71.3	3.82	0.853
Comfortable table and chairs	73.2	3.85	0.971
Restaurant has toilet facilities	33.5	2.96	1.223

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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Perception of food

As seen in Table 5, generally over 70% of customers perceived the food served by the restaurants as good and also agreed that food temperature was right (mean = 4.00). In addition, they agreed that food was tasty, was of good quality and healthy (mean = 3.90). They further agreed that the food was attractive (mean = 3.87) and had pleasant aroma (mean = 3.86). The above confirms that, food as the most basic factor that influences meal experiences (Geissler & Rucks, 2011). In contrast, the nutritious status of the food offered by the restaurant was described as barely satisfactory (mean = 3.82). However, as 67.3 percent agreed that food was nutritious, 32.7 percent did not share this opinion.

Perception of menu

With regards to menu, the majority of the respondents generally described the menus as good (mean=3.77). They agreed that menu chosen was available (mean=3.88), had different prices (mean=3.85), variety (mean=3.77) and easy to understand (mean=3.76). However, dishes described to diners (mean=3.59) had a percentage of 62.7 percent indicating that 37.3 percent of customers did not agree that their dishes were described to them.

Perception of price

According to Mensah (2009) price is the only element of food service which brings in revenue to a restaurant, this means that pricing is of vital importance to restaurant operators. The result showed that patrons of the restaurants perceived prices of the food as reasonable (mean = 3.79), fair

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(mean = 3.75) and offered value for money (mean = 3.76). On the whole, majority of patrons (67.8%) reported that they got value for money spent.

Perception of service

Respondents generally had a positive perception of the services rendered by staff of the restaurants. Evidence suggest that respondents perceived the staff of the restaurants to be polite (mean = 3.95), decently dressed (mean = 3.90), knowledgeable (mean = 3.56) and professional on their jobs (mean = 3.51). In contrast, just a little above half (53%) of the customers agreed that the service was prompt and 53.3 percent agreed that complaints were handled properly. However, almost half of the respondents did not agree that restaurant staff were prompt and handled complaints well.

Perception of environment

Generally, about 70 percent of the respondents perception of environment was good (mean=3.60). Customers' agreed that the environment was safe (mean=3.87), furniture was comfortable (mean=3.85) and atmosphere was clean (mean=3.84). Slightly more than 50% of respondents agreed that the restaurants had adequate parking spaces (mean=3.27) and were spacious enough (mean=3.41). Reynolds and Hwang (2006) stated that convenient accessibility to a restaurant amidst adequate parking facility enhances the meal experience of customers. On the contrary, availability of toilet facilities in restaurants (mean=2.96) was below average. That is, as 33.5 percent agreed that restaurants had toilet facilities, 66.5 percent did not share this opinion.

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Customers' assessment of the meal experience

The meal experience was assessed based on respondents' ratings of food, menu, price, service, atmosphere, security and sanitation on a scale ranging from 1 – 4 (poor to excellent). On the whole, 5 out of 7 factors assessed had more than 70 percent of the respondents rating meal experience as good with the exception of price and security. Additionally, in assessing the general meal experience, almost 8 out of each 10 respondents indicated that meal experience was good. This meant that majority of respondents had a positive meal experience in the restaurants visited.

Table 6: Respondents assessment of the meal experience

Assessment	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Food	0.0	6.3	81.3	12.3
Menu	6.5	14.6	70.8	8.1
Price	2.3	19.5	66.1	12.0
Service	2.3	11.4	71.1	15.2
Atmosphere	0.8	9.5	74.2	15.6
Security	14.6	26.4	52.5	6.5
Sanitation	1.9	11.8	74.1	12.2
General meal experience	1.1	7.2	79.5	12.2

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Respondents generally assessed food to be good (81.3%). Davis et al. (2012) are of the idea that food is one main factor that enhances a customer's total meal experience in a restaurant.

The security of a restaurant enhances meal experience (Reynolds & Hwang, 2006). A little over half (52.5%) of the respondents indicated that security of the restaurant premises was good. Only 14.6% of the respondents said that security was poor at the restaurants. As Reynolds and Hwang (2006)

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aver, there is the need for managers to provide adequate security because restaurant location should be safe to enhance meal experience.

From Table 6, it is evident that slightly more than 70% of the respondents assessed menu as good with just a handful (6.5%) rating them as poor. This implies that menus selected were available and there were varieties for respondents to make their own selections on what to eat in the restaurants.

Also, 66.1 percent of the respondents stated that cost of food was good, whilst 12 percent assessed it as excellent, with 19.5 percent assessing it as fair. This implies that generally, prices of food was good. Also, majority (71.1%) of the respondents generally assessed service as good.

A greater number of respondents (74.2%) assessed the atmosphere as good, whilst 15.6 percent rated it as excellent. Most respondents (74.1%) assessed sanitation of restaurants as good. This means that atmosphere plays an important role in meal experience. The finding is corroborated by the posits of Horng et al. (2013). In this view, customers do not only care about what they are going to eat but also the environment as well (Horng et al., 2013).

Reasons for eating out and the overall meal experience

Respondents' reasons for eating out was further examined in relation to their overall meal experience. The result is presented in Table 7. The result of the chi-square test performed on the data showed that, there was no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and respondents' overall meal experience ($p = 0.915$). Thus the null hypothesis could not be supported. Since at degree of freedom (*df*-20), the calculated chi-square value of 12.043 at significant level of 0.05 is less than the χ^2 table value of 31.410, it proves that

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there is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and the overall meal experience. This finding contradicts Hansen's (2005) assertion that people combine their meal experience with eating out as the basis to attain some kind of satisfaction.

Table 7: Reasons for eating out and the overall meal experience

Reasons for eating out	Overall meal experience			
	N=272	Fair	Good	Very good
Physiological	58	27.8	51.9	20.4
Social	43	33.3	46.2	20.5
Esteem	56	28.6	53.1	18.3
Convenience	70	33.9	54.8	11.3
Business	2	100.0	0.0	0.0
Health	20	27.8	55.6	16.7

Chi-square (χ^2) – 12.043 [a]   Degree of freedom - 20   P-value 0.915

Significance level of > 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Furthermore, it can be seen from Table 7 that among those who ate out for physiological reasons, 51.9 percent rated meal experience as good, 27.8 percent rated it as fair and 20.4 percent rated it as very good. Again, for those who ate out for social reasons, one third (33.3%) of them rated the meal experience as fair whilst 46.2 percent of them rated the meal experience as good.

In addition, more than 50 percent of respondents who assessed meal experience as good also ate out for esteem, convenience and health reasons. It was revealed that all the respondents who ate out for business reasons also assessed the meal experience as fair. This means that, on the whole, most

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patrons of grade three restaurants generally assessed their overall meal experiences as good despite their varying reasons for eating out. This confirms the discovery of Martens (2000) which avers that 75% of people eat out because they want to share mutual experiences during the meal for some degree of customer satisfaction. . Kasapila (2006) also posits that some customers' reason for eating out was to enjoy quality food alongside good ambience and service for a pleasant meal experience.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and the overall meal experience

A logistic regression model was used to examine the effect of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on the overall meal experience. The result of the goodness-of-fit test gave a significant value of 0.380 meaning that the model fitted well to the data.

In testing for the significance of predictors, the *p*-value for constant (0.403), age (0.272), marital status (0.359), level of education (0.43), employment status (0.423), monthly income (0.583), and religion (0.707) were all greater than the alpha value of 0.05 and therefore were not important in explaining the model. However, that of sex was found to be important in explaining the model since its *p*-value of 0.021 was less than the alpha value of 0.05.

From Table 8, the predicted logit of meal experience was -1.165 for sex. According to the model, the log of odds of a respondent having good meal experience is negatively related to sex. Thus given the same factors that influence meal experience, females are less likely to have a good meal

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experience. Also from Table 8, the odds of a female having a good meal experience is 0.312 less than that of a male.

Table 8: Logistic regression analysis on the effect of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on the overall meal experience

Predictor	B	S.E. β	Walds χ²	df	p	e β Odds ratio
Constant	1.592	1.906	0.698	1	0.403	4.916
Sex (male)	-1.165	0.505	5.317	1	0.021*	0.312
Age			2.603	2	0.272	
Age (<30 years)	-1.229	0.821	2.238	1	0.135	0.293
Age (30-55 years)	-640	0.72	0.791	1	0.374	0.527
Marital status						
Marital status (single)	0.421	0.458	0.843	1	0.359	1.523
Level of education			1.689	2	0.43	
Level of education (Basic)	0.045	1.231	0.001	1	0.971	1.046
Level of education (Secondary)	0.761	587	1.685	1	0.194	2.141
Employment status			1.723	2	0.423	
Employment status (employee)	1.138	1.111	1.048	1	0.306	3.119
(self-employed)	0.777	1.161	0.447	1	0.504	2.174
Monthly income			1.949	3	0.583	
Monthly income (<Gh¢300.00)	0.016	1.028	0	1	0.987	1.016
Monthly income (Gh¢301-899)	0.061	0.479	0.016	1	0.898	1.063
Monthly income (Gh¢900-1,499)	-0.543	0.438	1.537	1	0.215	0.581
Religion			0.694	2	0.707	
Religion (Christianity)	-0.019	1.32	0	1	0.988	0.981
Religion (Islam)	0.684	1.528	0.2	1	0.655	1.981
Test			χ²	df	p	
Goodness-of-fit test						
Hosmer & Lemeshow test			7.492	7	0.38	

* Predictor that was statistically significant

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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This finding confirms what Saad and Gill (2000) discovered. They found out that males and females differ in their perceptions of food quality, taste and physical environment. They further add that males are more adventurous than females. Also, Kleynhans (2003) is of the view of that males and females attach different importance to food and other factors related to it. All these support the results revealed in the logistic regression analysis which states that sex has a significant effect on meal experience. Thus the hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics on the overall meal experience was partially supported.

Respondents' perception of the meal experience on the overall meal experience

A logistic model was used to test the research hypothesis regarding the relationship between the effects of respondents' perception of the meal experience on the overall meal experience. The goodness-of-fit statistics which assess the suitability of the model showed that the model fitted well to the data with a significant value of $p > 0.05$.

From Table 9, the constant of the logistic regression was significant since it had a p-value of 0.000 less than the alpha value of 0.05. Food was not significant in the model since it had a p-value of 0.896. Additionally, service with a p-value of 0.098 and atmosphere with a p-value of 0.175 were also not significant in the model since they all had p-values greater than the alpha value of 0.05.

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Table 9: Logistic regression analysis of the effect of respondents' perception of the meal experience on the overall meal experience

Predictor	β	SE β	Walds χ²	df	p	e β (odds ratio)
Constant	-9.742	2.132	20.876	1	0.000*	0.000
Food	0.008	0.063	0.017	1	0.896	1.008
Menu	0.131	0.059	4.912	1	0.027*	1.140
Price	0.248	0.085	8.594	1	0.003*	1.282
Service	0.069	0.042	2.742	1	0.098	1.072
Atmosphere	0.061	0.045	1.836	1	0.175	1.063
Test			χ²	df	p	
Goodness-of-fit test						
Hosmer & Lemeshow test			16.59	8	0.21	

* Predictors that were statistically significant

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

However, menu and price were significant in the model since they had *p*-values of 0.027 and 0.003 respectively which were less than alpha value of 0.05. Menu is the centre piece of any eating establishment or eatery (Clark & Wood, 1999; Pantelidis & Marée, 2009). Also, Wansink et al. (2005) describe the dishes presented in a menu as a piece which discovers a person's sensory perception and thereby informs diners on what is available in a restaurant. Since no restaurant runs on charity, price is declared as a competitive tool and a major deciding factor that influences customers' meal experience (Gregoire, 2013). It is also a significant tool because it is the only element that brings revenue to a restaurant (Mensah, 2009).

Thus, after testing for the significance of predictors, it was realized from Table 9 that, the predicted logit of meal experience is equal to 1.13 menu plus 0.248 price (only menu & price are significant). According to the model, the

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log of the odds of a respondent having good meal experience is positively related to menu and price. Thus the better the menu and price, the more likely that a respondent will have a better meal experience. In other words, if menu has variety, different prices, is easy to understand, is available, is reasonably or fairly priced and has value for money, the greater the tendency that respondents will enjoy the meal experience. Thus the hypothesis which states that there is no effect on respondents' perceptions of their meal experience on the overall meal experience was partially supported.

Post-purchase behavioural intentions of respondents

Post-purchase behavioural intentions was gauged by three items namely recommendation, re-visit and alternative intentions. These three items were used to assess whether respondents' meal experiences merited recommendation, re-visit or alternative intentions. Generally, as more patrons of the restaurant agreed to recommend and re-visit, less agreed to alternative intentions. From Table 10, 78.7% of respondents indicated that they would recommend the restaurants to others whereas 83.2% indicated that they would re-visit the restaurants. However, only 30.9% had alternative intentions.

Table 10: Post-purchase behavioural intentions of respondents

Post-purchase characteristics of respondents	Agreed (n=272)	Percentage in agreement	Mean	Standard deviation
Recommend restaurant to others	211	78.7	4.03	0.865
Re-visit the restaurant	224	83.2	4.09	0.857
Alternative intentions	83	30.9	2.97	1.339

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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Among the alternative intentions, two main recurring themes were received from respondents: firstly, once meal experience is below expectation, defection was the best option. Secondly, defection surely takes place if attention first drawn to restaurant operators' concerning dissatisfaction of the meal experience does not yield to change. This finding is in consonance with the supposition of Burnham et al. (2003) who opine that whenever a customer is dissatisfied with the meal experience, alternative intentions are considered. Kasapila (2006) further suggests that alternative intentions occur when dining experience is professed to be below the anticipated level of expectation.

Meal experiences and post-purchase behavioural intentions

The results from Table 11, shows that all those who rated meal experience as poor disagreed to recommend the restaurants to others. For those who assessed the meal experience as fair, 58.9 percent agreed to recommend the restaurants to others. For those who rated the meal experiences as good, 84.6 percent agreed to recommend such restaurants to others. Again, 95.2 percent of respondents who assessed the meal experience as very good, agreed to recommend such restaurants to others. Also, all of the respondents who assessed meal experience as excellent agreed to recommend such restaurants to others.

Furthermore, the chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between meal experience and recommendation ($p = 0.001$) which suggests that there was a positive relationship between meal experience and recommendation of restaurant to others. As a result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between meal experience and

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recommendation of restaurant to others were rejected. Also, at a degree of freedom of (*df-16*), the calculated chi-square value of 38.99 at significant level 0.05 was greater than χ² table value of 26.296 which meant that there was a significant relationship.

Considering the cross-tabulation between assessment of meal experience and re-visit intentions to restaurants, the results, as indicated in Table 11, shows that all who rated meal experience as poor disagreed to re-visit. Still on re-visit intentions, 64.4 percent of those who rated meal experience as fair agreed to re-visit whilst 12.3 percent disagreed to do so. Again, 90.4 percent of the respondents assessed meal experience to be good and agreed to re-visit. Also, 92.7 percent rated it as very good and agreed to re-visit such restaurants.

Further analysis using chi-square indicated that there was a significant relationship between meal experience and re-visit intentions to restaurants (*p* = 0.000). Also, at a degree of freedom of (*df-16*), the calculated chi-square value of 42.85 at significant level 0.05 was greater than χ² table value of 26.296 which meant that there was a significant relationship between meal experiences and re-visit intentions to restaurants. As a result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between meal experience and re-visit intentions to restaurants was rejected.

The results from respondents' alternative intentions showed that when meal experiences was fair (34.2%) and good (22.8%), customers were unable to decide whether they should embark on alternative intentions or otherwise. Also, when meal experiences were good (41.5%) and very good (58.5%) respondents emphatically disagreed to alternative intentions. In contrast, all

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respondents who assessed alternative intentions poor and fair (30.2%) indicated that, at least they will agree to alternative intentions. Furthermore, 35.7 percent and 24.4 percent of the respondents representing good and very good respectively, also shared the same opinion as stated above.

Table 11: Meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions

Meal experience	Post-purchase behavioural intentions			χ^2 p-value
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
Recommendation				(χ^2)
Poor	100.0	0.0	0.0	38.988ª
Fair	11.0	30.1	58.9	p=0.001
Good	1.6	13.8	84.6	*df*-16
Very good	2.4	2.4	95.2	
Excellent	0.0	0.0	100.0	
Re-visit intentions				(χ^2)
Poor	100.0	0.0	0.0	42.847ª
Fair	12.3	23.3	64.4	p=0.000
Good	3.2	6.4	90.4	*df*-16
Very good	2.4	4.9	92.7	
Excellent	0.0	0.0	100.0	
Alternative intentions				(χ^2)
Poor	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.195ª
Fair	35.6	34.2	30.2	p=0.171
Good	41.5	22.8	35.7	*df*-16
Very good	58.5	17.1	24.4	
Excellent	0.0	100.0	9.7	

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Additionally, the chi-square analysis indicated that there was no significant relationship between meal experience and alternative intentions of respondents to restaurants (p = 0.171). Again, at a degree of freedom of (*df-16*), the calculated chi-square value of 0.195 at a significant level of 0.05 was

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greater than the χ^2 table value of 26.296 which means we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus there is no significant relationship between meal experiences and alternative intentions of customers.This finding is in consonance with the suppositions of Ladhari (2000), Hans and Ryu (2011) and Jani and Hans (2011).These researchers observed that meal experience plays a vital role in the life of customers who remain loyal. They further conceive that respondents adopt positive post-purchase behavioural intentions which includes re-visit and word-of-mouth intentions.

Table 12; Summary of hypotheses tested in the study

Hypotheses	Findings
H1. There is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and respondents' socio-demographic characteristics.	Fail to reject
H2. There is no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and meal experience.	Fail to reject
H3.a. There is no significant effect between customers' perceptions of the meal experiences on the overall meal experience.	Reject for menu & price
H3.b. There is no significant effect of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on the overall meal experience.	Reject for sex
H4. There is no significant relationship between customers' meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions.	Reject for re-visit & recommendation

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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Suggestions for improvement in meal experience

Respondents were asked to offer suggestions towards improvement in the meal experience. The suggestions were classified under food, menu, price, service, environment and others.

Forty three respondents (15.8%) made suggestions towards food improvement. They specifically recommended limiting the use of spices, salt and oils in the preparation of food, improving the quantity of foods improving and taste, of the food, serving more local dishes and serving foods hot.

Also, 22.1 percent of the respondents made suggestions for improving upon food services. The suggestions included ensuring prompt service, training of staff, providing good customer service, responsiveness and improvement of staff physical appearance.
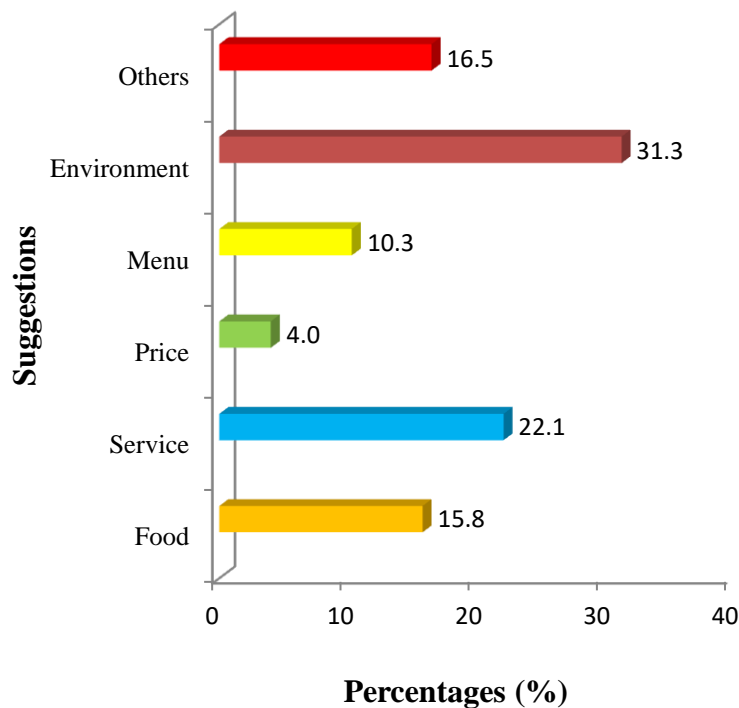

Figure 4, Suggestions for improvement in meal experience

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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Again, 4 percent of respondents offered suggestions in relation to the prices of food. The suggestions were that, price should always be attached to menu, should be stable and also prices should be indicated on the menu.

Furthermore, 10.3 percent of respondents offered some suggestions for menu improvement. Among the suggestions were that, menu should always be displayed, , more variety should be added to the menu, there should be provision of special menus on a particular day and requested dishes on the menu should be made available all the times.

About one-third of respondents (31.3%) made suggestions for improving the restaurant environment. Some of the suggestions were that restaurants should improve ventilation, provide fans, provide air conditioners, and acquire fire extinguishers and also generators. They further suggested that the surroundings of restaurants should be kept clean, volume on television and radio sets should be reduced, adequate parking spaces should be provided plus toilet facilities for customers.

Finally, other suggestions for improvement (16.5%) were that, managers should solicit for food contracts from firms, free dessert should be provided occasionally, restaurants should be advertised, new branches should be opened, suggestion boxes should be provided and regular customers should be occasionally rewarded.

Summary

Most of the customers basically ate out for convenience and for physiological needs. Again, the majority of customers perceived food to be tasty, of good temperature, of quality and good quantity. They expected menu

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chosen to be available, varied with different prices and also reasonable for all. Customers perceived that service staff ought to be polite, decently dressed and serve food to suit customers' orders. In addition, customers perceived restaurant to be easily accessible, clean and safe.

Factors that influenced the meal experience were rated mostly as good and very good by respondents, with more than three quarters of customers indicating that they will re-visit the restaurants and/or recommend them to others. The study revealed that menu, price and sex had a significant impact on the overall meal experiences of customers. Finally, there was also a significant relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions of respondents (re-visit and recommendations).

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. It provides the summaries of major findings, draws conclusions based on the findings and outlines recommendations in relation to meal experience and customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions in Sekondi-Takoradi and the nation at large. It also suggests areas for further research into meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Summary

The main objective of the study was to examine the effect of meal experience on customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions to grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi. The specific objectives were to;

1. Identify the socio-demographic characteristics of customers who dine out in grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

2. Identify the reasons for eating out in restaurants.

3. Analyse customers' perceptions of the meal experience in grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

4. Examine the factors that influence customers' meal experience.

5. Assess the relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions.

The conceptual frameworks guiding the study were dining satisfaction and return patronage model by Kivela et al. (1999), kleynhans (2003)

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consumer expectations model and Ryu and Han's (2010) dinescape scale model. These models explain several determinants of meal experience.

The study used a cross-sectional survey, and a non-experimental (explanatory) research design. This was based on the positivist perspective. A sample of 291 customers were surveyed using the convenience sampling procedure. In all, 272 questionnaires were used for the analysis, since 19 were incomplete and therefore could not be used.

The quantitative data gathered was edited, coded and analysed using SPSS software (version 17). Logistic regression analysis was used to test the research hypotheses regarding the relationship between meal experience and socio-demographic characteristics, as well as customers' perception of their meal experience. Also, chi-square was used to test the association between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of customers', reasons for eating out and meal experience, as well as meal experience and its influence on post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Summary of main findings

Customers' main reason for eating out was for convenience (28.1%), however, as 31.4% males were eating out for convenience reasons, 27.1% females were eating out for social reasons. Diners above 50 years ate out mainly for physiological reasons whilst those below 50 ate out for convenience reasons.

The study also revealed that more than 70% of customers perceived the temperature of food as right, menu chosen available and price of food as

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reasonable. In the same vein, customers stated that staff were polite and restaurants were easily accessible.

A chi-square test of association revealed that there was no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and meal experience at ($p = 0.915$). Similarly, there was no significant relationship between reasons for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics of customers. Furthermore, a logistic regression analysis indicated that, sex, menu and price were statistically significant predictors of the overall meal experience.

In terms of the post-purchase behavioural intentions of respondents more than 78% agreed to re-visit and recommend restaurant to others, only 30.9% agreed to switch to other eateries. Again, there was a significant relationship between meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions in relation to recommendations and re-visit intentions.

Finally, respondents suggested that the restaurants should improve on their environments, services and food. Conclusively, the research revealed that there was a significant relationship between meal experience and customers' post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Conclusions

The main reason for patronising grade three restaurants were for convenience, especially the proximity of the restaurants to the places of work of customers. The term 'location, location, location,' should always be of extreme importance to restaurant operators because it serves as a determining factor of choice when diners are looking for a place to eat. Again restaurants situated far from customers view and/or accessibility mostly collapses it.

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Also given the conditions prevailing in grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi, females are less likely to have a good meal experience than their male counterpart. Previous studies have shown that the factors that mostly influenced meal experience were food, service and atmosphere. However, in this study, price and menu emerged as the vital predictors of customers' meal experience in grade three restaurants. Previous theories adopted from dining satisfaction and return patronage model by Kivela et al. (1999), kleynhans (2003) consumer expectations model and Ryu and Han's (2010) dinescape scale model, did not include price and menu as determinants of diners' post-purchase behavioural intentions.

Most customers (83.2%) decided to patronize a restaurant again only when their expectations are met. Others, (78.7%) also agreed to recommend restaurants to others only when they are sure of a positive meal experience. Conclusively, disconfirmation theory by Kivela et al. (1999) confirmed that most of the customers' who developed a feeling of dissatisfaction embarked on a not returning patronage because they had alternative intentions.

Recommendations

Firstly, it is recommended that since people eat out for convenience and physiological reasons, restaurant operators should meet this basic need of satisfying their hunger as the restaurants are nearer to their places of work. Restaurant operators should ensure that dishes on their menu are available throughout the day and served at the required temperature.

Secondly, restaurants should be located at convenient places to ensure easy access for customers. Restaurants need to be established close to offices,

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factories, schools, transport stations, shopping centres and above all near business centres.

Thirdly, restaurant operators should solicit ideas from customers, especially on how to enhance or maintain diners' meal experience. This can be done by the use of a suggestion box or through the distribution of a questionnaire in order to gather information on customer's meal experience and expectations.

Finally, management should organise periodic in-service training for their staff and ensure that good staff-customer relationship is maintained. Employees should always be decently dressed and make it a point to welcome customers cheerfully and promptly as soon as they enter the restaurant. In the end resource persons can be occasionally invited during monthly meetings to enlighten restaurant managers on contemporary trends, customer and staff expectations and other challenging issues.

Suggestions for further studies

The study was predominantly on meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions of customers of grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi. A further study could be done on the role of managers and/or service staff in promoting customer satisfaction and retention. Research can also be undertaken to assess employees' contribution to customers' meal experience in hotels and restaurants. Finally, a comparative study can be undertaken to examine the extent to which activities of managers and employees can affect customers' meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions to restaurants.

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APPENDIX 1

DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

Meal experience and post-purchase behavioural intentions of customers' of grade three restaurants in Sekondi-Takoradi.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/Madam,

This study is being undertaken for a Master of Philosophy in Hospitality Management. I will be most grateful if you kindly partake in this study by providing responses to the questions. This is solely for academic purposes therefore anonymity and confidentiality is assured.

Date ....

Time of day ....

Year of establishment...........................

Location ....

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SECTION A – CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MEAL EXPERIENCE

1. What is your main reason for eating out in this restaurant?

....

....

2. Indicate the extent to which you agree to the following statements regarding your meal experience in this restaurant

   1=strongly disagree (SD), 2=disagree (D), 3=neutral (N)

   . 4=agree (A), 5=strongly agree (SA)

No. 2a	Food	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Food is tasty					
2.	Food is attractive					
3.	Food served is of good quality					
4.	Quantity of food is sufficient					
5.	Food has pleasant aroma					
6.	Temperature of food is right					
7.	Food is nutritious					
8.	Food is healthy					

No. 2b	Menu	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Menu has variety					
2.	Menu is easy to understand					
3.	Menu chosen was available					
4.	Menu has different prices that meets customer needs					
5.	Menu dishes are described for customers					

No. 2c	Price of food	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Price of food is reasonable					
2.	Price of food is fair					
3.	Price offers value for money					

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No. 2d	Service	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Customer is welcomed by staff					
2.	Staff are polite					
3.	Staff are knowledgeable					
4.	Staff exhibit professionalism					
5.	Service is prompt					
6.	Staff are not discriminatory					
7.	Staff are helpful					
8.	Staff make customers special					
19.	Customer complaints are handled properly by staff					
10.	Staff are decently dressed					
11.	Food served is exact as requested					

No. 2e	Environment	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	There is adequate parking space					
2.	Restaurant is easily accessible					
3.	Restaurant is in a safe and secure environment					
4.	Restaurant surroundings are clean					
5.	Restaurant has a pleasant smell					
6.	Restaurant is spacious					
7.	Restaurant has nice ambience and décor					
8.	Restaurant is not noisy					
9.	Cutlery and crockery are clean					
10.	Table and chairs are comfortable					
11.	Restaurant has toilet facilities					

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No. 2f	Post-purchase behavioural intentions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	I will recommend this restaurant to friends and family					
2.	I will visit this restaurant again					
3.	I will look for another restaurant that best meet my needs					

3. Please indicate your assessment on the meal experience in this restaurant by using the five point scale of 1-5. (**1-poor, 2-fair, 3-good, 4-very good and 5 excellent**).

How will you rate the following to your meal experience	1	2	3	4	5
a. Food					
b. Menu					
c. Price					
d. Service					
e. Atmosphere					
f. Security					
g. Sanitation					
h. Overall meal experience					

SECTION B – EFFECT OF MEAL EXPERIENCE ON POST-PURCHASE BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS

4. Is this your first time of visiting this restaurant?

     1. Yes   (   )   2. No   (   )

5. If no how many times do you visit this restaurant within a week? (Please specify)   ....

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6. What advice would you like to offer management of this restaurant towards improving the meal experience?

....

....

....

....

SECTION C – SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

7.   Sex   1. Male   ( )   2. Female   ( )

8.   Age ....

9.   Marital status (please √)
      1. Married   ( )   2. Single   ( )
      3. Widowed   ( )   4. Divorced   ( )

10.   Highest level of education (Please √)
      1. Basic   ( )   2. Secondary   ( )
      3. College of Education   ( )   4. Polytechnic   ( )
      5. University   ( )   6. Postgraduate   ( )
      7. No formal education   ( )

11.   Employment status

      ....

12.   Monthly income (please √)
      a. Below Ghc300.00   ( )
      b. Ghc300.00-599.00   ( )
      c. Ghc600.00-899.00   ( )

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    d.   Ghc900.00-1,199.00   (   )

    e.   Ghc1,200.00-1,499.00   (   )

    f.   Ghc1,500.00-1,799.00   (   )

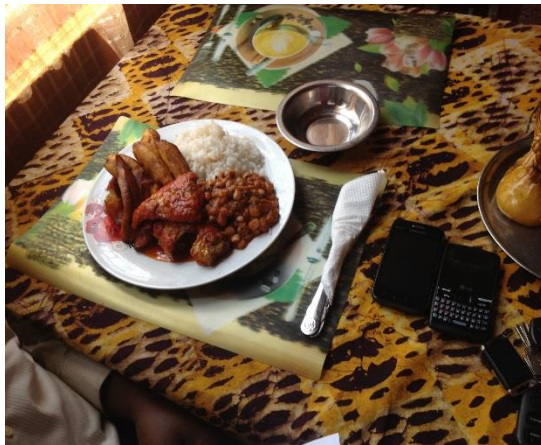   g.   Ghc1,800.00 and above   (   )

13.   Religion (Please √)

    1. No Religion   ( )   2. Catholic   ( )

    3. Protestant   ( )   4. Pentecostal/Charismatic ( )

    5. Other Christian ( )   6. Islam   ( )

    7. Traditionalist   ( )   8. Others..

THANK YOU

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APPENDIX 11

PICTURE GALLERY FROM GRADE THREE RESTAURANTS

Food

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Menu

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Atmosphere

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