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**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF QUICK
RESTAURANTS IN ABIA STATE**

NDUBUEZE JACINTA OZIOMA

**Department of Marketing, College of Management Sciences
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State**

OFFOR MARCELINA

**Department of Marketing, College of Management Sciences
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State**

AND

OBASI RAYMOND (Ph.D)

**Department of Marketing, College of Management Sciences
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State**

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of customer experience on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. The study employed a survey research design. The research focused on the customers of six (6) quick-service restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Convenience sampling was employed in the study. To test all hypotheses, a simple regression model was employed, through the SPSS software version 25.0. The study revealed that food quality positively and significantly affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Frontline functionality exerts positive and significant effect on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Lastly, it was found that physical environment exerts positive and significant effect on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. It was concluded that customer experience exerts significant and positive effect on consumer behaviour of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. The study recommends that managers of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria should accord service quality a high priority. The restaurants operators can focus on preparing and preserving food made from natural sources and devoid of artificial flavourings to increase brand choice.

Keywords: Customer Experience, Food Quality, Frontline Functionality, Physical Environment, Customer Patronage, Quick Restaurants.

Introduction

The food service industry has been recorded as growing significantly in recent years and is expected to continue this positive development in the future (MarketLine, 2019). It is one of the fastest growing industries in Nigeria with an increasing demand for eating out, and it is contributing to the country's economic growth. This is also suggesting that the sector is gaining acceptance among customers (Salami & Ajobo, 2012). Supporting this assertion, Akinbola, Ogunnaike and Ojo (2013) noted that quick restaurant industry in Nigeria today is a beehive of activities and is gaining a lot of attention both within and outside the country.

There is a perceived increase in the number of quick restaurants that crop up in every part of Abia State of Nigeria. Some of the notable quick restaurants in the city of Abia State include; Crunchies, Chicken Republic, Kilimanjaro, Hoffers, Domino's Pizza, and many more. According to Ahmed, Hossain, Malek & Begum (2008), consuming fast foods has become a recent trend among upper society, teenagers and youths. According to Park (2004), eating at fast food restaurants not only help customers to satisfy their hunger, but it also creates need for convenience, pleasure, entertainment, time saving, social interaction and the mood transformation. Besides, consumers experience excitement, pleasure and a sense of personal well-being are part of the experiences in visiting fast food restaurants (Park, 2004).

Creating a strong customer experience is now a leading management objective. Customer experience has an important and contributing role to determine the success of a company (Yakhlef, 2015). Every effort made by a company will use the maximum service and provide good quality products, in order to get a satisfactory experience for the customer; it also affects the customer's subclass in the future (Chen & Lin, 2015). Schmitt (1999), defined customer experience as a perception or recognition based on the motivation of consumers who observe or have felt in a real activity that can enrich the value of these services and products.

According to a recent study by Accenture (2015), improving the customer experience received the number one ranking when executives were asked about their top priorities for the next 12 months. Schmitt (1999) was one of the first scholars to emphasize the importance of customer experience, and Pine and Gilmore (1998) specifically addressed the importance of experiences in today's society and the opportunities for firms to benefit from creating strong and enduring customer experiences. Marketing science, and specifically customer management, has been slow to adopt these developments in the marketing literature. Therefore, it is essential to know how customer experience management practices will affect customer purchase decision the most during their customer experience when visiting a restaurant to eat.

Quick restaurant managers who would like to be successful are required to create a pleasant service atmosphere and provide the best service to their customers. However, socio-economic conditions, and health rules of customers make it necessary to serve food and beverage services based on conscious and scientific ground rather than a random service (Türksoy, 2007; Lin & Mattila, 2010). As a matter of fact, it is not enough to meet the physical needs of customers at the enterprises where food service is provided. There is also the necessity of providing an environment in which customers enjoy atmosphere by meeting their emotional,

intellectual and spiritual needs, have pleasant time, save time and relax (Harrington, Ottenbacher & Treuter, 2015; Longart, Wickens & Bakir, 2017; Badem & Öztel, 2018). In this manner, the likelihood of increased customer experience quality and continuation of choosing the restaurants that sustain the quality in question will increase.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of customer experience on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Specifically, the aims are to:

- i. Ascertain how food quality affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria;
- ii. Examine how frontline functionality affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria;
- iii. Determine how physical environment affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study

H0₁: There is no significant effect of food quality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

H0₂: There is no significant effect of frontline functionality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

H0₃: There is no significant effect of physical environment on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Customer Experience

Abbott (1955) and Alderson (1957) focused on the broader notion that “what people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences”. Furthering this path, experiential theorists in the 1980s (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989) encouraged a broader view of human behavior, especially recognizing the importance of the emotional aspects of decision making and experience. Marketing practice has also embraced the study of customer experience. Pine and Gilmore (1998) conceptualized the idea of “experiences” as distinct from goods and services, noting that a consumer purchases an experience to “spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stage to engage him in an inherently personal way.”

Other researchers, however, have argued for a much broader view of the customer experience. Schmitt, Brakus, and Zarantonello (2015) suggested that every service exchange leads to a customer experience, regardless of its nature and form. This expansive perspective considers customer experience holistic in nature, incorporating the customer’s cognitive, emotional, sensory, social, and spiritual responses to all interactions with a firm (Bolton et al. 2014; Gentile, Spiller, and Noci 2007; Lemke, Clark, and Wilson 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009). Recent business practice has also broadly defined the customer experience as “encompassing every aspect of a company’s offering - the quality of customer care, of course, but also advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability. It is the internal

and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company” (Meyer and Schwager 2007).

Multiple definitions of customer experience exist in the literature. Schmitt (1999) took a multidimensional view and identifies five types of experiences: sensory (sense), affective (feel), cognitive (think), physical (act), and social-identity (relate) experiences. Verhoef et al. (2009) explicitly defined customer experience in a retailing context as a multi-dimensional construct and specifically state that the customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the retailer. In their study on brand experience, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) conceptualize brand experience as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design. They conceptualize and show that brand experience consists of four separate, though related, dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural.

Customer Experience Management Practices

The following are the customer experience management practices that are reviewed in the study based on the extant literature.

Food Quality

Food is the core product in quick restaurants and food quality plays a very significant aspect in business success (Liu and Jang, 2009). Thus, food quality is a critical success factor as it affects a firm’s long-term financial performance owing to its capacity to create favourable preference for the organisation’s products in the mind of the consumers. Food quality is a very subjective matter among consumers and researchers have distinguished between objective and subjective food quality. Objective quality’ is focused on product- and process-oriented quality; while product-oriented quality relates to the physical attributes of the foods such as fat content. Studies have posited that food quality significantly affect customer purchase decisions (Hanaysha, 2016). The presentation, freshness and food taste are other factors identified as determining factors of consumer decisions that predict customer patronage.

Marković et al., (2010) stated that among the factors of service quality, food quality, and physical environment, food quality is the most important concerning customer patronage. Food quality is an essential part of the whole restaurant experience which contributes to customer patronage and whether they will return to the restaurant (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Moreover, different researches have the same result on the importance of food quality to how loyal customers are and to how they think about a brand (Marković et al., 2010). Similarly, food quality is believed to be one of the main components that influence the way customers value a place (Susskind & Chan, 2000).

Restaurant Environment

Nowadays, more people eat outside their home more often than it was some years ago. According to Ryu et al. (2012), customers are increasingly putting a premium on quick service and better eating environment. Owing to the intense competition in the quick restaurant industry, restaurateurs are enhancing their

aesthetics and design, thereby providing more comfortable environment for dining. Therefore, making the atmosphere more pleasant and innovative is essential for a firm's success in the quick restaurant business as the restaurant's atmosphere is given immense consideration by consumers as a very crucial component of the establishment; and many perceived it as a significant complement to the menu served (Almohaimmeed, 2017).

Although the primary function of quick restaurants is to provide food, many customers nowadays prefer an environment that will enhance their quality of life by eating out in comfortable dining space. Restaurants surroundings help to create an expectation of dining experience even before the customer is served, thus improvement in service quality and food quality alone will not adequately satisfy the demand of customers (Hornig et al., 2013). According to Kotler (1973) the influence of physical environment in marketing contexts is based on the premise that the design of an environment through a variety of means, including lighting, layout, sounds, colours and temperature could stimulate perceptual and emotional responses in consumers and affect their behaviour.

Frontline Functionality

The frontline office is where customers make their first important impression, and furthermore, it is a communication hub for a restaurant's operation (Baker & Riley, 1994). In their opinion, Vallen and Vallen (2009) described the frontline office as a bundle of duties and customer service. These definitions go a long way to outlining the importance of the frontline functionality and the role it plays in the delivery of customer service; and that management of this important role at all times must make ensure that standards are kept.

The term Frontline Functionality is used in many service organizations just for administrative purposes including quick restaurants. It is the job of the frontline personnel to ensure that customer's first experience with the restaurant is a positive one and this can be achieved through vigorous training of the frontline personnel. It is equally the job of the frontline personnel to ensure effective management of the service encounter. Hence, the job of the frontline staff is about exceeding expectations of customers, not just meeting them.

Consumer Patronage

Patronage is a concept that helps one understand why consumers purchase certain brands. Creating value in customers increases their purchase decision, since the value that customers perceive from products and services will increase their purchase decision (Werelds et al., 2017). Studies have revealed that product characteristics strongly affect the consumers' patronage. Customers usually determine whether or not to buy or rebuy a product or service based on whether or not their past interactions with it were acceptable or joyful (Ali et al., 2016; Prebensen et al., 2014). Han et al. (2019) established and validated the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intent. Behavioural intention (BI) towards quick restaurant is a subjective judgment of how patrons will behave in future regarding their dining experiences. Different forms of BI are exhibited by customers of quick restaurants ranging from revisit intention (RI), repurchase decision (RPD) to recommending and disseminating positive word-of-mouth messages (Kim et al., 2013).

The consumer patronage decision is the result of brand-related marketing actions and activities (Altschwager et al., 2017). The variable of "consumer purchase decision" is one of the most important variables in most of the studies, and owing to easiness and saving in costs, they have evaluated purchase decision as a substitute for consumer behaviour (Hussain Shah et al., 2012). The interest of marketing researchers to purchase is due to its relation to purchase behaviour (Karimi Alavijeh & Afshar Nejad, 2016). According to Morwitz (2014), the best predictor of consumer purchase behaviour will be consumer purchase decision.

Relationship between Customer Experience and Customer Patronage

Customer experience management practices and consumer purchase decision are closely intercorrelated and interrelated with each other. Customer experience management practices has been investigated under the effects of consumer purchase decision according to previous studies (Nasermoadeli & Ling 2013; Yang & He 2011; Juaneda-Ayensa & Mosquera 2016). Consumer purchase decision is affected by various factors (Hussain & Ali 2015). Such conceptual factors include cleanness, music, scent, temperature, lighting, colour, display/layout. Quick restaurants are required to be clean to attract more customers. It could improve restaurant atmosphere and provide an image of comfort and luxury.

Music is one of the main concepts for increasing the consumer purchase decision to patronize quick restaurants. The scent of the restaurant should be arranged carefully not to bother the customers but to keep them in the restaurant for longer period of time (Mills & Paul 1995). In addition, temperature and lighting should be manipulated to create a desirable atmosphere at the restaurant. Lighting is generally used to highlight some particular products. Quick restaurants managers should also consider designing the colours of the restaurants from colour theory perspectives (Morrin & Ratneshwar 2000). They should use useful colours and warm rainbow colours to attract their specific customers according to their ages, gender, and professions. Finally, design of the display should be arranged based on the types of products and size of the restaurants (Zeynep & Nilgun 2011).

In a recent study, Nasermoadeli, Ling, & Maghnati (2013) investigated 330 participants to identify any relationships between customer experience management practices and consumer purchase decision in a quantitative research. Their findings showed that customer experiences management practices had major impacts in the consumer purchase decision. Igbaria, Guimaraes and Davis (1995) examined the results of customer experience management practices within the structure of the customized Technological Acceptance Model and discovered that the customer experience creates immediate and oblique effect on consumer purchase decision. Bellman, Loshe and Johnson (1999) also concluded that consumer purchase decision is influenced by the levels of consumer experience management practices.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) - Ajzen (1991)

The theory of planned behaviour framework put forward by Ajzen (1991) serves as the foundation for this study. Customer purchase decision is seen as a deliberate action (Neneh, 2022). According to the planned behaviour theory (TPB), an action's intent determines how likely it is to be carried out (Ajzen, 2020). The stronger the intent, the more likely it will be.

TPB consists of three elements that can forecast a person's behaviour (Miller et. al., 2009), (1) Personal attitude towards outcome of behaviour: The extent to which a person views behaviour favourably or unfavourably (Ajzen, 1991). The individual's attitudes toward a certain behaviour, or whether engaging in that behaviour is favourably or adversely valued, can be used to predict the desire to engage in that behaviour (Maina, 2011; Pribadi, 2005). (2) Perceived social norm (subjective norms) pressure to exhibit the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). (3) Perceived behavioural control, or how easy or difficult it is to carry out particular behaviours (Ajzen, 1991).

Numerous studies have been done to assess how Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour affects customer patronage decisions in a western culture. To ascertain this connection in an African environment, particularly in Nigeria, further study is still required.

Relevance of the Theory of Planned Behaviour to this Study

This study is anchored on the theory of planned behaviour since the theory is useful in predicting behaviours such as patronage, repeat purchases, etc. understanding the interplay of attitudes, norms, and control can help businesses influence customer behaviour. This study is aimed at identifying how customer experience affects consumer behaviour of Quick Restaurants in Abia State. Customers' attitudes toward Quick Restaurants in Abia State can shape their prior experiences and expectations, significantly impact their satisfaction and future behaviours. By examining customer experience, we can explore how positive or negative experiences influence customer patronage and repurchase intentions. Customers' perception of how easy or difficult it is to engage with a product or service affects their experience. Factors like food quality, frontline functionality and physical environment play significant role in shaping customers' experience of a quick service restaurant, which can directly affect patronage and repurchase intention.

Empirical Review

Ewanlen (2022) examined the influence of food quality, customers' service, physical environment and security on customers' intention to revisit a restaurant. The study also sought to ascertain the extent of gender difference in customers revisit intention. A survey research design and convenience sampling method was adopted in this study. Questionnaires were distributed to 350 patrons of fast food restaurants in Yenagoa metropolis Bayelsa state Nigeria. The descriptive analysis of the respondent showed that male were the dominant patrons of fast food restaurants. Also, middle income earners and self-employed were the most common among the respondents, Furthermore, the result shows that there is gender difference in customers' intention to revisit a restaurant, Equally, the study found that food quality, customers' service, physical environment and security significantly influence customers revisit intention. Ewanlen (2022) posited that customer intention to revisit a restaurant is contingent upon food quality, customers service quality, physical environment quality and provision of adequate security. Consequent upon these findings, the paper recommended among others the inclusion of restaurants operations among the functions of the government regulatory agency in charge of food and drugs administration and control, and the

training and retraining of employees on the strategies of effectively managing customers' relation.

Lamai et al. (2020) studied the effects of perceived service quality (PSQ), FQ, price perception (PP), and the mediating influence of CS on revisit intention in restaurant chains in Rangoon, Myanmar. Data were obtained with the aid of non-probability quota sample of 400 customers in four branches of a large restaurant chains in the city of Rangoon. This study applied both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) prior to test the hypothesized factor structure of all the variables, while structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied to test the relationships among the variables and the proposed hypothesis. Data collected were analyzed with SAS software version 7 7.12 and AMOS software. The findings showed that CS perfectly mediated the relationship between PSQ, FQ, PP and RI. Furthermore, PSQ, FQ, PP have direct effects on CS and indirect effect on RI. The perceived service quality was the most significant predictor of CS while the FQ had the least influence. The authors posited that the results of the study will assist restaurant managers to better understand the significant strategic choice factors to improve quality service in their operations in order to survive in the hyper-competitive business environment in the FFR industry.

In a similar study in Pakistan, Ali, Alam and Bilal (2021) examined the impact of SQ, price (P) and RE on customer loyalty (CL) via the mediating role of CS in the FF industry in Islamabad. Data for the study were obtained from a cross section of fast food customers through face-to-face self-administered questionnaire. Convenience sampling technique was used to draw a sample 385 respondents upon which statistical analysis was based. Descriptive statistical tools such as means and percentages as well as multiple regression analysis were the analytical techniques employed. The results revealed that SQ, P and RE exerted positive and significant effects on CS, while CS also had significant impact on CL. Furthermore, CS significantly mediated the association between SQ, P, RE, and CL. The authors recommended that restaurant operators need to consider good quality of service, fairness in price, and attractive and comfortable restaurant environment in order to increase customer satisfaction and win the loyalty of the customers.

Esmailpour and Mohseni (2019) examined the effect of Customer Experiences on Consumer Purchase Intention. The study was an applied research in terms of objective and correlational type of descriptive-survey, and in terms of the nature of data collection. The population comprised consumers of restaurants and fast food stores in Shiraz. A sample of 385 consumers of restaurant and fast food stores in Shiraz city was selected using convenient sampling method. Validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through content validity and its reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. The results of their study confirmed a positive and significant effect of five dimensions of customer experiences - behavioural experience, cognitive experience, affective experience, sensory experience and social experience on consumer purchase intention. They concluded that the owners and managers of restaurants and fast food stores can influence the purchase intention behaviour of their customers and make them loyal to their restaurant by creating good experiences for their customers.

Haritaoglu et al. (2022) carried out a field study on sensory cues and customer revisit intention. In the study, the influence of sensory marketing cues on revisit intention of customers is analyzed. The research was conducted with respect to third-generation coffee stores to be able to include sensory cues designed to appeal to all five senses. Data were collected via online survey and were analyzed using SPSS 23 statistical package program. Multiple sensory cues were found to positively affect revisit intention. It was revealed that smelling, tasting and touching cues have positive effect on customers' revisit intention. It was recommended that retail companies can use sensory cues to increase consumers' shopping duration in the store with an enjoyable experience and make them revisit the same store.

Torabi, Hamidi, and Safaie (2021) examined the effect of sensory experience on customer word-of-mouth intention, considering the roles of customer emotions, satisfaction, and loyalty. 306 valid copies of the questionnaire were collected and analyzed from customers of one of the largest and oldest retail chain stores in Iran (ETKA chain stores). The conceptual model of the study was developed on the basis of S-O-R model. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and multiple regression analysis were used to examine the conceptual model of research through the use of Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach SmartPLS software. The results showed that customer sensory experience directly and significantly affects customer emotions. In addition, regression analysis revealed that among the five sensory experiences (taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell), taste has the most effect on customer positive emotions. After taste experience, touch, sight, and sound have the most effect on customer positive emotions, respectively.

Ndu and Nwaru (2018) ascertained the relationship between the dimension of front desk operations management and the measures of guest loyalty. A sample of 150 hotel guests was drawn for the study; while the analysis was based on 126 of these guests. The univariate analyses showed acceptable level for each of the variables; while the correlations were performed with Pearson's product moment correlation technique at a significance level of 0.05. The result of the study showed strong positive correlations between the dimensions of the independent variable and the measures of guest loyalty. Based on this, it was concluded that front desk operations management is a strong predictor of guest loyalty; as hotel operations managers can use it to achieve their desired levels of improved outcomes especially interns of repeat visit and referrals. Based on these, it was recommended that to achieve desired levels of guest repeat visits and referrals, hotel management especially the front office department should regularly train their staff so they can be continuously updated with latest front desk management practices. This will equip them with the requisite knowledge on how to handle customers' requests and complaints so as to assure them of service quality.

Research Methodology

The study employed a survey research design. The research focused on the customers of six (6) quick-service restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. The studied quick-service restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria were Chicken Republic, Crunchies Fried Chicken, Kilimanjaro, Apples, Romeo, and Hoffers. A sample size of 385 respondents were used in the study. Convenience sampling was employed in the study. Convenience sampling offered the researchers the flexibility to select and interview individuals who were readily available and willing to contribute relevant

information to the study. The primary research instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit comprehensive responses related to customer experiences within quick-service restaurants. The questions covered various aspects, including food quality, frontline functionality, physical environment and customer patronage. For the purpose of this study, the Likert scale served as the preferred method for gathering opinions, measuring responses on a spectrum of degrees or levels. The Likert scale consisted of five points: Strongly Agree (SA): Assigned 5 points; Agree (A): Assigned 4 points; Neutral (N): Assigned 3 points; Disagree (D): Assigned 2 points; Strongly Disagree (SD): Assigned 1 point. Upon completion of data collection, statistical analysis was applied to interpret and draw conclusions from the gathered information. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were employed to present an overview of the responses. Additionally, the analysis of data obtained from the survey was aligned with the predefined objectives of the study. To test all hypotheses, a simple regression model was employed, allowing for a nuanced exploration of relationships between variables. The entire analytical process was conducted electronically, utilizing the SPSS software version 25.0. This approach ensured accuracy, efficiency, and enabled a systematic exploration of the dataset, contributing to the rigor and reliability of the study's findings.

Results and Discussion

Questionnaire Distribution and Return

Table 1: Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

Copies of Questionnaire	Copies of Questionnaire	Copies of Questionnaire
Distributed	Returned	Not returned
385	365	20

Source: Field Survey, 2024

For this study, a total number of three hundred and eighty-five (385) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the customers of quick-service restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Out of this number, three hundred and sixty-five (365) copies were returned, while twenty (20) copies were neither filled nor incorrectly filled. Thus, the presentation and analyses of data were based on the correctly completed copies of the questionnaire and are as follows;

Food Quality

Table 2: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of food quality statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)				
	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
You are satisfied with the overall quality of foods provided by the restaurant	4.15	.695	365	Accepted
The foods of the restaurant meet customers' expectations	4.29	.667	365	Accepted
The staff of the restaurants are knowledgeable in providing quality customer service	4.38	.741	365	Accepted
The restaurant provides food varieties	3.86	.968	365	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the frequency and mean scores of the responses of the studied respondents on food quality. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that “You are satisfied with the overall quality of foods provided by the restaurant” had a mean score of 4.15, “The foods of the restaurant meet customers’ expectations” had a mean score of 4.29. Also, “The staff of the restaurants are knowledgeable in providing quality customer service” had a mean score of 4.38, and “The restaurant provides food varieties” had a mean score of 3.86.

Physical Environment

Table 3: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of physical environment statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)				
	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The ambience of the restaurant attracts customers	4.22	.615	365	Accepted
The firm’s physical environment contributes to customers’ patronage	4.48	.562	365	Accepted
There is a spacious parking lot in the restaurant	4.19	.631	365	Accepted
The restaurant has enough amenities like restrooms, etc.	4.56	.624	365	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the frequency and mean scores of the responses of the studied respondents on physical environment. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that “The ambience of the restaurant attracts customers” had a mean score of 4.22, “The firm’s physical environment contributes to customers’ patronage” had a mean score of 4.48. Also, “There is a spacious parking lot in the restaurant” had a mean score of 4.19, and “The restaurant has enough amenities like restrooms, etc” had a mean score of 4.56.

Frontline Functionality

Table 4: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of frontline functionality statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)				
	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The frontline employees of the restaurant are highly knowledgeable in their roles	4.62	.622	365	Accepted
You always patronize the restaurant because of the interactive skills of the frontline staff	4.26	.671	365	Accepted
Frontline job knowledge is good for constant patronage	4.33	.579	365	Accepted
You enjoy the way the restaurant’s frontline staff interact with customers	4.66	.618	365	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of the studied respondents on frontline functionality statement items. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that “The frontline

employees of the restaurant are highly knowledgeable in their roles” had a mean score of 4.62, “You always patronize the restaurant because of the interactive skills of the frontline staff” had a mean score of 4.26. Also, “Frontline job knowledge is good for constant patronage” had a mean score of 4.33, and “You enjoy the way the restaurant’s frontline staff interact with customers” had a mean score of 4.66.

Customer Patronage

Table 5: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of customer patronage statement items

	Item Statistics (N= 365)			
	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The quality of the restaurant’s products makes you make quick patronage	3.81	1.122	365	Accepted
You have confidence in your decisions concerning the products of the restaurant	4.41	.581	365	Accepted
Price is a major factor that influence your patronage	4.48	.611	365	Accepted
Product and service quality are important to induce positive patronage	4.26	.702	365	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of the studied respondents on purchase decision statement items. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that “The quality of the restaurant’s products makes you make quick patronage” had a mean score of 3.81, “You have confidence in your decisions concerning the products of the restaurant” had a mean score of 4.41. Also, “Price is a major factor that influence your patronage” had a mean score of 4.48, and “Product and service quality are important to induce positive patronage” had a mean score of 4.26.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H0₁: There is no significant effect of food quality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Effect of food quality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Table 6: Regression analysis showing the effect of food quality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value
Constant	0.823	0.207	3.972
Food Quality	0.336	0.057	5.868***
R	0.842		
R ²	0.709		
F-statistic	142.870		
N	365		

Source: Survey data, 2024

Note: ***= Significant at 1% level

From Table 6, simple regression result shows that food quality is a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State

of Nigeria. Food quality was significant at 1% probability level and positively related to customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. This result implies that the more the increase in food quality, the more there is increase in customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria.

The F-statistic in the regression above was 142.870 and significant at the 1% probability level indicating that the model specification was correct. The estimated regression equation shows that customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria is a linear function of the explanatory variable (food quality). The r^2 was 0.709 showing that 71% of the variation in customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria was explained by food quality. With this result, the Null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of food quality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. It is concluded that there is significant effect of food quality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

H0₂: There is no significant effect of frontline functionality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Effect of frontline functionality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Table 7: Regression analysis showing the effect of frontline functionality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	t-value
Constant	1.580	0.280	5.644
Frontline functionality	0.530	0.084	6.301***
R	0.652		
R ²	0.425		
F-statistic	43.288		
N	365		

Source: Survey data, 2024

Note: *** = Significant at 1% level

From Table 7, simple regression result shows that frontline functionality is a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Frontline functionality was statistically found to be significant at the 1% probability level and positively affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. This indicates that the more the studied quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria increase frontline functionality, the more they achieve increased customer patronage and vice versa. This assertion is at the 99% confidence level.

The F-statistic in the simple regression above was 43.288 and significant at the 1% probability level indicating that the model specification was correct. The estimated regression equation shows that customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria is a linear function of frontline functionality. The r^2 was 0.425 implying that 43% of the variations observed in customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria are explained by frontline functionality.

With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of frontline functionality on customer patronage in Abia State of Nigeria is

rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. It is concluded that there is significant effect of frontline functionality on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

H0₃: There is no significant effect of physical environment on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Effect of physical environment on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Table 8: Regression analysis showing the effect of physical environment on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	t-value
Constant	1.093	0.209	5.238
Physical environment	0.337	0.053	6.387***
R	0.804		
R ²	0.647		
F-statistic	162.095		
N	365		

Source: Survey data, 2024

Note: *** = Significant at 1% level;

From Table 8, simple regression result shows that physical environment is a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Physical environment was significant at 1% probability level and positively affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Thus, as the studied quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria increase the components of their physical environment, customer patronage also increases. There are more customers that will patronize their brands as a result of neat physical environment.

The F-statistic in the simple regression above was 162.095 and significant at the 1% probability level indicating that the model specification was correct. The estimated regression equation shows that customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria is a linear function of physical environment. The r^2 was 0.647 showing that 65% of the variation observed in customer patronage of the studied quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria were explained by physical environment. This assertion is at the 99% confidence level. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of physical environment on customer patronage in Abia State of Nigeria is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. It is concluded that there is significant effect of physical environment on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

The first objective of this study ascertained how food quality relates with customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Simple regression result shows that food quality is a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. This is in agreement with previous studies. Jin, Lee and Huffman (2012) have stated in their study that restaurant's food quality has direct impact on customer patronage. In their study,

significant interactions between perceptions about the quality of food offered to customers in restaurants and patronage have been identified. Rajput and Gahfoor (2020) also confirmed the positive association of food quality and customers' patronage at fast food restaurants.

Simple regression result shows that frontline functionality is a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. In studies where frontline functionality and customer patronage are examined, a positive relation has been identified (Adiele, Miebaka & Ezirim, 2015; Taegoo et al., 2015).

Simple regression result shows that physical environment is a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. This is also consistent with previous studies. Ewanlen (2022) found that physical environment significantly influences customers purchase intention. Also, Rajput and Gahfoor (2020) confirmed the positive association between physical environment and customer patronage of customers at fast food restaurants.

Conclusion

A cursory look at the business landscape in Abia State will reveal that quick restaurants dot the major streets of the cities in the State. This study examined the effect of customer experience on consumer behaviour of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Regression analysis revealed that food quality positively and significantly affects customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Regression analysis further revealed that frontline functionality has a positive and significant effect on customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Also, physical environment was found to be a positive and significant factor affecting customer patronage of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria. Thus, it can be concluded that customer experience exerts significant and positive effect on consumer behaviour of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Managers of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria should accord service quality a high priority. The restaurants operators can focus on preparing and preserving food made from natural sources and devoid of artificial flavourings to increase brand choice.
2. Managers of quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria should pay more attention to their physical environment because it directly affects brand choice. The physical environment is not only just to keep current restaurant's customers but also a useful factor to attract the new customers.
3. The staff members working for the studied quick restaurants in Abia State of Nigeria should receive regular training so that they can get well accustomed to the organisational culture. This way they will deal with the customers appropriately, respond to their problems quickly and provide them with quality services that fulfil the restaurant's corporate objectives properly.

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