

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FOOD PREFERENCES OF CUSTOMERS OF FOOD SERVICE
ESTABLISHMENTS IN HO IN THE VOLTA REGION OF GHANA

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

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

Candidate's Signature: Date:

Name:

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 Signature: Date:

Name:

Co-Supervisor's Signature: Date:

Name:

ABSTRACT

There is an increase in the number of food service establishments operating in the country as there is a emerging demand for food away from home. However, knowledge of customers' food preference is critical to the sustainability of the industry. The purpose of this study was to assess the food preferences of customers of food service establishments in Ho, Ghana. The study employed the quantitative approach and questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 350 respondents. Respondents were sampled using systematic sampling technique and the research adopted the descriptive design. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS and Chi-square was employed to test research hypotheses. The study revealed that *Banku* with okro soup was the most preferred food while the least preferred food was *Ampesi*. However, there was a significant relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics (educational level, marital status, ethnicity and monthly income) and food preferences. The food was perceived to be healthy and attractively presented. The study also found a significant relationship between taste and food characteristics. From the study it could be deduced that respondents preferred foods from their ethnic groups. This implies that some tribes have reverence for their staple food and have no desire to change. Managers should prioritize taste in the preparation of their meals since it was a significant factor consumer consider in their choice of food.

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DEDICATION

To my dear husband Eric Aseye and parents Mr and Mrs Nti

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Food is important to human life (Glover, 2015; Fadriquelan, 2012; Reyes, 2010). It is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for the body (Inkumsah, 2012). According to Hall and Sharples (2003), food remains an essential element in tourism experiences as well as a source of concern to many travellers. It has also been identified as an attraction to customers in many destinations and a source of income and revenue for the residents and the destination's economy (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Selwood, 2003).

The hospitality and tourism industry is a major force in the economy of the world, an activity of global importance and significance (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, & Wanhill, 2000). The industry is seen as one that produces and sells its products through the provision of a wide range of services. Hospitality services include the facilities and amenities created to receive and entertain guests (Mensah, 2009). These services include accommodation, food, and beverage, special events, attractions, recreation and entertainment. According to Kivela and Crotts (2006 p 354), 'one major issue for consideration in the hospitality industry is the food at the destination for customers, in a nutshell, there is no travel without food'.

Andaleeb and Caskey (2007) affirm that food consumed outside the home has become common these days due to the fact that more and more people are working thereby making eating a necessity for many. Food is eaten

to satisfy basic needs for survival, energy for physical activity, maintenance, repair and growth of human life (Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Sualakamala & Huffman, 2010). Food eaten provides energy and nutrition for development and well-being and it is important to make the right decision when choosing food (Glover, 2015). A healthy diet is fundamental to the functioning of the body; it helps prevent diseases, maintain weight and quality of life (Hanes, 2015).

Globally, there is an emerging demand for food away from home because of higher incomes, changes in consumption patterns, changes in household composition and the time pressures created by dual-working families (Sriwongrat, 2008). The world is ever changing; some of these changes are brought about as a result of advancement in technology, health consciousness, rapid urbanization and busy lifestyle. These changes have altered the normal way of cooking and eating at home, which is making people turn to foods prepared in the food service establishments (Horsu & Yeboah, 2015). With these changes, food service operators must place a premium on understanding the ever-changing market to remain competitive in the food service industry (Abdullah, Abdurahman, & Hamali, 2013).

There has also been a rise in health consciousness with the increasing availability of health information, going hand-in-hand with the ageing of populations and increased risk of lifestyle diseases (Weiss, Feinstein, & Dalbor, 2013). This has brought about high rates of overweight and obesity in some parts of the world.

The food service industry has responded to these trends by changing some cooking methods from frying to poaching, boiling, grilling, steaming

and casseroling (Rosalin & Soetanto, 2006; Sung-Pil & Mahmood, 2001). Furthermore, these changes are evidenced in some giant food service industries by switching to vegetable oils for deep frying by the largest fast food hamburger chains such as McDonald's, Wendy's and Burger King in response to consumers' concerns over the health effects of saturated fat intake.

Kentucky Fried Chicken, for instance, has added non-fried foods such as grilled chicken, meat cooked in a sauce, chicken on the bone oven cooked, and pulled chicken twister to its menu (Bjarnadottir, 2015). In 1991, McDonalds also introduced the McLean Deluxe sandwich, which used a 91 percent fat-free putty, while Taco Bell has also introduced "Border Lights" low-fat menu items in 1994 (Sung-Pil & Mahmood, 2001).

In Ghana, there is an increasing number of full-service restaurants, fast-food restaurants and traditional catering establishment (Mensah, 2009). However, the food service industry is dominated by traditional establishment and street foods. Food is seen as an important Ghanaian heritage is traditional food (Amuquandoh, 2011) which serves as a medium to display the country's culture. The food offered in most food establishments is a blend of traditional ingredients which varies by Region and the various ethnic groups. The food service establishments in the Regions of Ghana offer varying dishes though there are similar dishes which cut across the Regions, example beans.

Notable foods of some Regions include: Ashanti and Eastern Region (*fufu and light soup*), Volta Regions (*akple and okro soup*), Greater Accra Region (*Ga kenkey with pepper and fish*), Central Region (*Fantekenkey and fish*), Western Region (*akyeke*), BrongAhafo Region (*fufu with nkontomire soup*), Upper East, Upper West and Northern Region (*tuo-zaafi with green*

leave soup). A study conducted by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) on tourist's preference of traditional Ghanaian food identified red red (fried ripe plantain with beans), fufu and soup, banku and okro stew, plantain, yam, kenkey and kelewele.

Fast food businesses have also sprung up across the country and they serve food such as fried rice, French fries, fried chicken among others. These fast foods establishment include multinationals firms like KFC, McDonalds, On-the-Run and Mr Bigg's whilst majority are locally own and operated. The production and sale of traditional foods constitute a major aspect of the country's culture that can be pack aged for tourism purposes. In Ghana, some food service providers are now serving more grilled and baked foods than the fried ones and customers are now requesting for low-fat diet and healthy foods than the junk or unhealthy foods (A. S. Otto, personal communication, 14th August 2015). As a result of these changes service providers who focus on their markets are likely to make changes to meet customer expectations (Kearney, 2010). To ensure competitive advantage and sustainability in food service establishments operators need to comprehend the factors that influence patrons' decisions when selecting food.

Statement of the Problem

Food service establishments are industries designed to prepare and serve food for consumption on or off the premises (Clarke & Chen, 2007). Customers are known to be selective as to what they consider as appropriate food (Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei, 2013). Even though, there have been an increase in the number of food service establishments operating in the country,

customers' food preference which is one of the critical aspects which aids the sustainability of the industry have not been given the urgent attention through research.

Issues regarding foods are changing in the sense that foods eaten away from home become part of human life and household food budget, however, with these changes, not all people have the same food preferences (Carrigan, Szmigin, & Leek, 2006; Cheng, Olsen, & Southerton, 2007; De Boer, McCarthy, & Cowan, 2004; Den Hartog, 2003; Healy, 2014; Recours & Hebel, 2007; Warde, Cheng, & Olsen, 2007). Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), stated that to gain and sustain strategic advantage in a viable food service establishment, managers have to undertake customer food preference assessment.

As posited by Inkumsah (2012), preference for food prepared outside the home is on the increase due to the fact that now, more people are working thereby having less time to plan and prepare food for their households. The food service industry is growing fast and has a huge influence on the global economy, however, it is greatly affected by customers' ever-changing preferences (Abdullah et. al., 2013; Sriwongrat, 2008).

Extensive studies have been conducted on food preferences in developed countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and the USA. Most of these studies, however, were only limited to local food preferences. Also, the classic work of Abdullah et al. (2013) only focused on the dimensions of customer preferences in the food service industry in Malaysia. Similarly, in the Philippines, Kalalo, Cablao, Cabatey, Mantal, Manalo and Felicen (2014) studied cuisine preferences of local tourists.

There have been few studies on food preferences in developing countries. Notable exceptions in Ghana include tourists' traditional food preferences by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) and concerns of international tourists regarding traditional food (Amuquandoh, 2011). A more recent study by Amenumey, Dayour and Adongo (2015) examined the factors that motivate tourists to consume indigenous food and beverages. Apart from that, Amos, Intiful, and Boateng, (2012) studied Ghanaian Adolescent Food Eating Habits, focusing on the relationship between peer influences and eating habits of students in Senior high schools. Besides, most of these studies have been done in cities such as Accra, Cape Coast, Kumasi and Takoradi. There has been no such study in Ho in the Volta Region.

Ho is now a Municipality. It is also closer to eco-tourism sites such as Kalakpala game reserve, TafiAtome monkey sanctuary, Gemi Mountain and Wote Waterfalls. The construction of a Regional airport at Ho, the capital city of the Volta Region, the springing up of some tertiary institutions such as the University of Health and Allied Sciences, Evangelical Presbyterian University College, and Teacher training, the upgrading of Ho Polytechnic into a Technical University and converging of commercial enterprises have all contributed to making Ho the destination for many people. The potential of the Region to attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists, as well as students, is not in doubt (Andoh, 2015). With these developmental activities in the region, there is a tendency of visitors trooping in for businesses, school or stop over to visit the nearest attractions in the Region. As food consumption is vital to the maximization of the potential associated with tourism, it is imperative that attention is given to food preferences of the customers.

Even though there is a considerable amount of research on customers' food preferences, previous studies were limited to international tourists' perceptions of local food, patronage of street foods, and food safety as such studies on customers' food preferences are scarce. More so, researchers have paid little attention to the main factors influencing food preferences. This study seeks to fill the research gap, by assessing the food preferences of customers of food service establishments in Ho.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess the food preferences of customers of food service establishments in Ho. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the foods preferred by customers
2. Analyze customers' perception of characteristics of foods offered by the Food Service Establishments
3. Examine the relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences
4. Examine the relationship between food characteristics and customers' food preferences

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences.

H₁: There is a statistically significant relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between food characteristics and customers food preferences.

H₁: There is a statistically significant relationship between food characteristics and customers food preferences.

Significance of the Study

The study aims at identifying customers' food preferences of food service establishments by primarily focusing on customers' food preferences and the factors that account for such preferences. There is competition in the food service industry and for managers to be in business, they must be abreast with these changes. In order to survive, food service businesses need to know what customers want, need and are ready to pay for (Sung-Pil & Mahmood, 2001).

In addition, results of this study will be a useful guide for farmers and food suppliers. The findings will help in creating awareness about the types of foodstuffs and products on high demand on the market, customer preferences regarding food choice and factors that account for these changes, thereby guiding farmers and food suppliers to adopt measures to provide the exact products to satisfy customers demand.

The results of this study will also provide meaningful insights into customers' food preferences and the dynamics of such preferences over time.

This is very critical for the food service industry as it will inform decision making in relation to types of food offered to customers. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and the Ghana Hoteliers Associations (GHA) could also benefit from the results to plan for nutrition education and dietary intervention programme.

Lastly, the study would serve as a source of relevant information on food preferences of customers in the food service industry as well as management bodies for further studies by providing new insights and disclosing already existing literature. This would help in widening the horizon of other researchers and aid in further research into the subject.

Delimitation

The research was limited only to food service establishments and the study area was Ho in the Volta Region. Secondly, the data were collected from customers who were available in the selected food service establishments at the time of the study. More also, the research focused on understanding customers' food preference and perceptions about food characteristics.

Definition of Terms

Food

Any nutritious substance taken in by living things that provide energy, essential materials for growth.

Preference

It is a feeling of liking or wanting one person or thing more than another person or things, an advantage that is given to some people or things and not to others, something that is liked or wanted more than another thing, therefore becomes what is preferred.

Food preference

It is the way people choose from available foods which are usually done on the basis of biological or economic perceptions, including taste, value, purity, ease or difficulty of preparation, and the like.

Customer

This is the recipient of a good or a service obtained from a seller or supplier through a financial transaction or exchange of money.

Food service establishment

It refers to a place where food is prepared and intended for individual portion service and includes the site at which the individual portions are provided, whether consumption occurs on or off the premises.

Organization of the Study

The study is structured into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction of the study and specifically looks at the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses, significance of the study, scope and delimitation, the definition of some terms used and chapter organization.

Chapter two represents a review of related literature. The literature on food preferences, foods preferred by customers, factors influencing customers' food preference, socio-demographic characteristics of customers and food preference, food characteristics and food preferences were reviewed. Also the conceptual framework/models that inform the study were reviewed.

The third chapter looks at the research methodology and it includes the study area, research philosophy, research design, sources of data, study population, sample size and sampling procedure. It also includes the research instrument, pre-testing, data collection procedure, problems encountered in the field, data analysis, and ethical issues.

Chapter Four presents the results, discussions of the findings from the study, strength and limitation of the study. Finally, chapter Five reflects a general summary of the entire study. It consists of the summary of the major findings of the study, conclusion, and recommendations. Also, suggestions for future studies were also outlined.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the related literature on the topic under investigation in order to situate the study in the appropriate empirical and conceptual framework. The chapter looks at areas including theoretical issues and models relating to customers' food preferences, food preferences, foods preferred by customers, socio-demographic characteristics and food preferences, food characteristics and food preferences, and food preferences and model of factors influencing food preferences.

Theoretical Framework

The theories reviewed for this study include Economic Model of Food Consumption, Conceptual Model for Understanding Factors Influencing Food Choice, Conceptual Model for Attitude-behaviour-Context (ABC) and the conceptual framework adapted is Model of Food Preferences.

Economic Model of Food Consumption

The model was proposed by Rose, Bodor, Hutchinson and Swalm (2010). They establish that the framework was based on an economic model of food consumption but had been adapted to include neighbourhood effects. With this model, economists view individuals as attempting to maximize their utility from goods and will subject their tastes and preferences to budget

constraint determined by their income. Food demands, or purchases, are functions of income and prices, as well as tastes and preferences.

According to Rose et al. (2010), “food cost,” was used instead of “price,” because the actual price that a consumer pays is a function of the in-store price and travel costs to the store where the food is purchased. These travel costs are a function of the availability of food stores, such as supermarkets or small groceries in a consumer's vicinity, and the in-store availability of specific foods. Even though a small grocery might be very close to an individual if there is no in-store availability of fresh fruits. Car ownership could lower overall travel costs if it shortens travel time to stores.

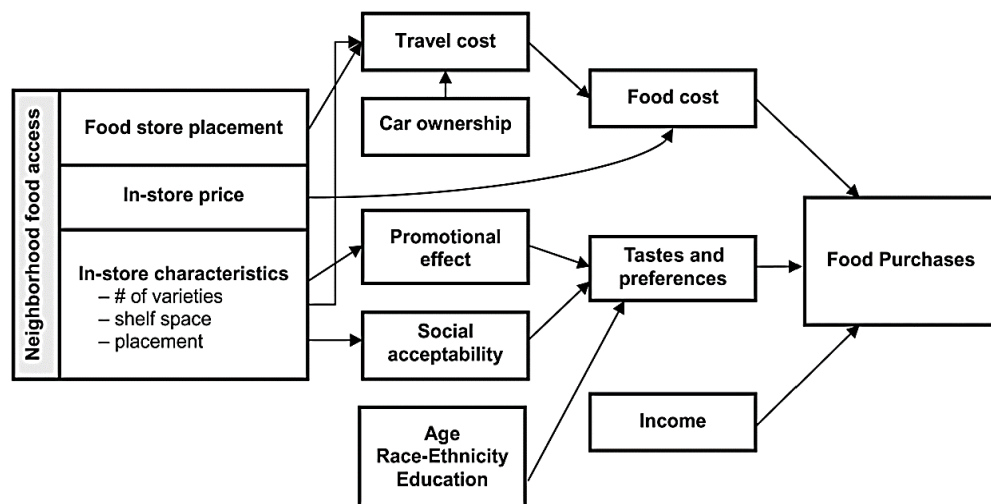


Figure 1: Economic Model of Food Consumption

Source: Rose, Bodor, Hutchinson and Swalm, (2010).

A detailed specification of demographic characteristics, including age, race-ethnicity, schooling, and other variables, is useful for capturing unobserved information on consumers' tastes and preferences. Such tastes and preferences might be based on cultural food habits associated with particular ethnic groups, or they might be based on knowledge and concern of the

consumer regarding diet and health outcomes. In-store food available, including shelf space and placement of foods near registers, has a promotional effect that can influence consumers' preferences. At high concentration, or relative shelf space availability of certain foods, e.g., energy-dense snack foods in corner groceries could make these foods appear more socially acceptable and thus also influence consumers' preferences.

This model is relevant to the present study in that it acknowledges income, food prices, and prices of other goods, and availability of certain foods as factors influencing food preferences of customers at food establishments. Moreover, a high concentration or availability of certain foods in the establishments such as energy-dense snack foods, could make these foods appear more socially acceptable and thus influence consumers' preferences.

This model was only designed to focus on few aspects of neighbourhood access and food consumption behaviour, as such, other factors have been left out. Time constraints influence purchase decisions, because, with less time available, households are more likely to purchase convenience or prepared foods. This process, as well as decisions regarding away-from-home foods, has been left out of the figure. It had drawn arrows in one direction, but food demand certainly influences supply.

The model focused on details regarding the purchase of foods rather than their actual intake. But it is easy to envision that the causal chain extends further to the right, such that purchases affect intakes and ultimately weight status.

Conceptual Model for Understanding Factors Influencing Food Choice

This model was developed by Krebs-Smith and Kantor (2001). It suggests that there are many points in the sequence of production to consumption that ultimately affect food choice and highlight where assessments are required. The model summarizes the methods of assessment pertaining to the food supply, foods acquired and foods consumed by individuals, especially as they pertain to fruits and vegetables, and reviews the surveillance data available on current levels and trends over time.

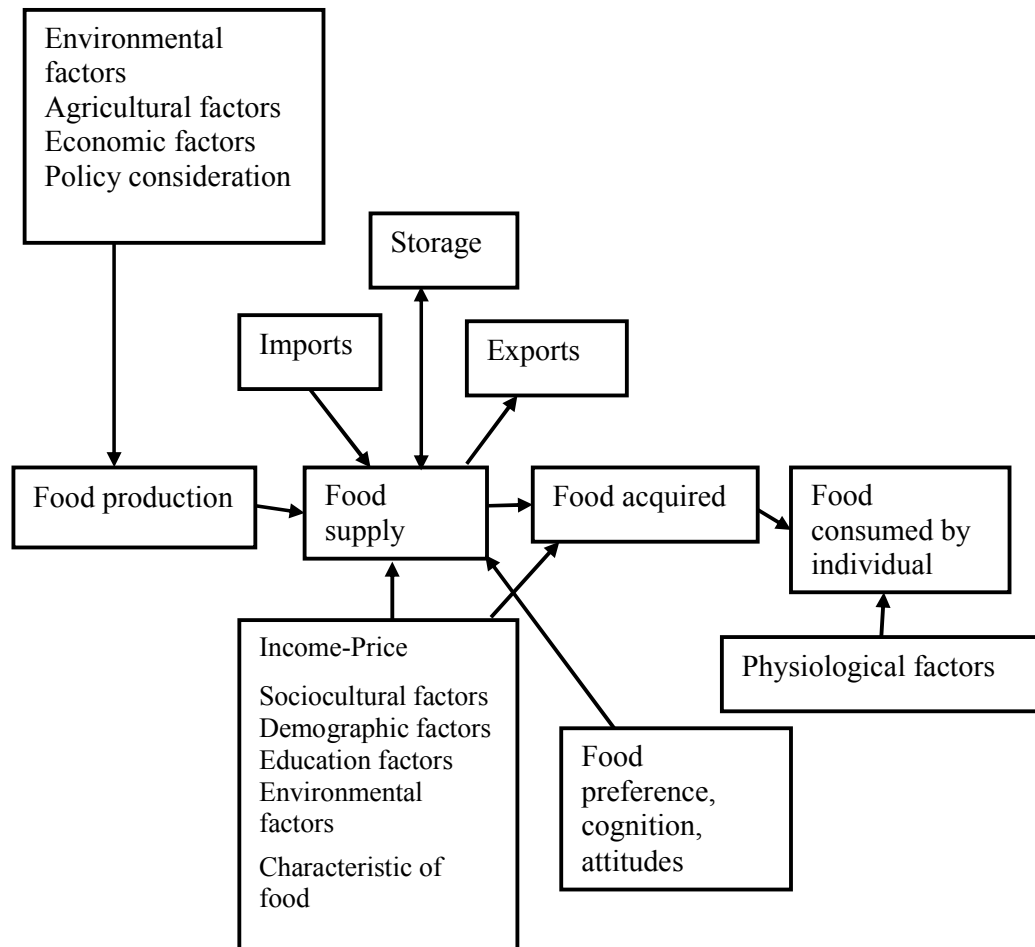


Figure 2: Conceptual Model for Understanding Factors Influencing Food Choice

Source: Krebs-Smith and Kantor (2001)

The model provides a depiction of the interplay among agricultural, economic and social forces and the supply, acquisition, and consumption of foods. While there is much to learn from existing assessment measures such as data on food supply, food acquired and food consumption, much more data are required to develop an understanding of the intervening factors and their relationships to the food production/food consumption sequence. This model is relevant to the study in that it also indicates price as a major determinant of food preference in addition to socio-demographic and food characteristics which are paramount to the evaluation of the food preferences of customers by the present study.

This model provided a depiction of the interplay among agricultural, economic and social forces and the supply, acquisition, and consumption of foods. Although much can be learned from the existing assessment measures such as data on food supply, foods acquired and food consumption. Many more data are required to develop an understanding of the intervening factors and their relationships to the food production/food consumption sequence. This model is relevant to the study in that it also indicates price as a major determinant of food preference in addition to socio-demographic.

Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC)

Attitude-Behaviour-Context theory which was developed by Nie and Zepeda (2011), is a sociological model of environmental behaviour which incorporates contextual factors that may influence or limit one's ability to act on their intentions. Contextual factors include socioeconomic and demographic variables, and community characteristics, which may limit access to organic

and local foods. Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC) theory as an overall framework that contains Means-end chain (MEC) theory and Food-related lifestyle (FRL) models.

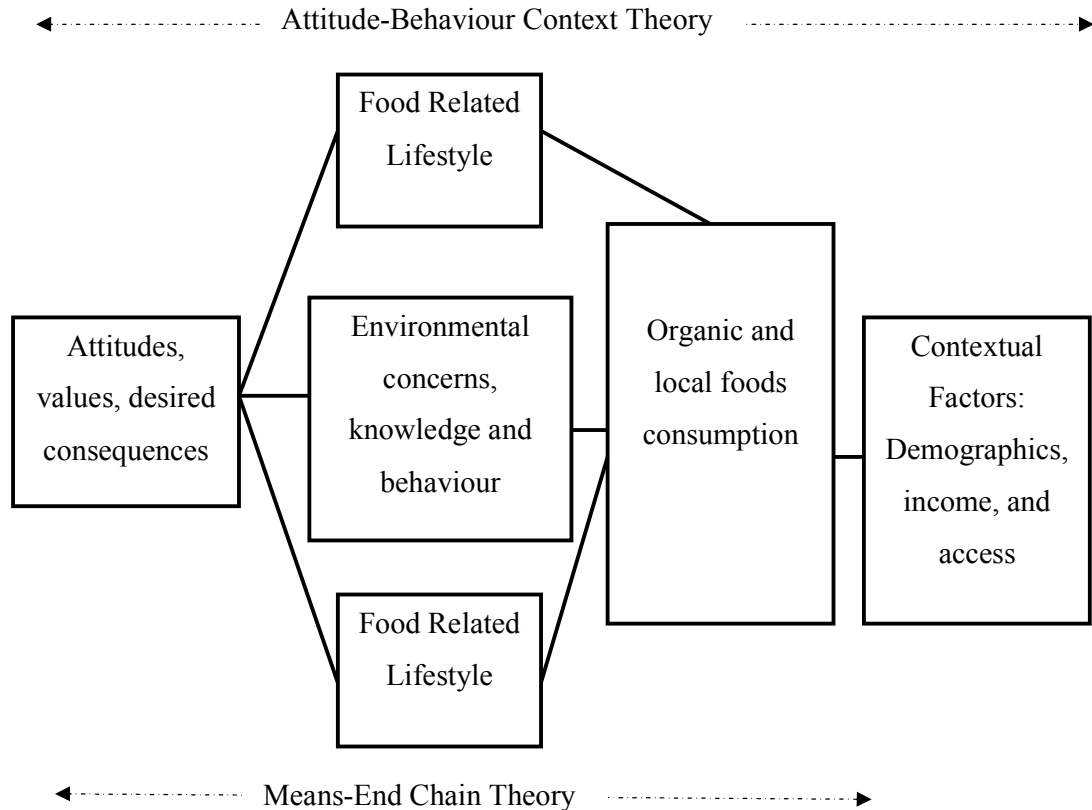


Figure 3: Conceptual Model for Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC)

Source: Nie and Zepeda (2011)

The Means-end chain (MEC) theory assumes that consumers choose products whose attributes, consequences and values reflect the consumers' goals; in other words, they buy products for the functional and psychological benefits they provide.

Food-related lifestyle (FRL) model is an application of MEC theory. According to FRL, there are five components of lifestyle, which mediate

between values and product attributes that motivate behaviour or intentions and which can be used to explain food purchases: ways of shopping, quality aspects, cooking methods, consumption situations, and purchasing motives.

Quality aspects refer to the attributes consumers seek from products. Cooking methods refer to how much effort and time is put into meal preparation and who is responsible. Consumption situations addresses where and when food is eaten. Purchasing motives encompass desired consequences of a meal. The theory is considered relevant to the study as it indicates the role that demographics, income and access influence food preference which is key to the present study.

Concept of Food Preference

Food preference defined by Randall and Sanjur (1981:151) is the degree of like or dislike for a food. Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] (1987) also defines food preferences as attitudes toward a given type of food, as compared with other foods, on the basis of favourable physiological reaction, sociological norms, or pleasant sensation.

Rosalin and Soetanto (2006) see food preference as the selection of food items from the choices available among acceptable foods. Likewise, Rozin (1996), on the other hand, saw food preference as a comparison between two or more foods which leads to a choice.

These food preferences according to Birch (1980a), Cardello and Maller (1982); Randall and Sanjur (1981); Shepherd, Stockley, Schyns and Taylor (1988) and Wein, Sabry and Evers (1989) can exist within individuals

and can be assessed by rating the liking or pleasantness of food items. Another common usage in food science is linking preference to liking/tasting.

Food preference, in general, refers to the selection of one food item over the other (Chang, Kivela, & Mark, 2010; Kardes, 1999; Rozin&Volhmecke, 1986). Abdullah, Abdurahman, and Hamali (2013) are of the notion that food preferences can be regarded as an individual's attitude towards a set of objects, typically reflected in an explicit decision-making process. Studies have suggested that differences in attitudes, preferences or benefits from services ultimately motivate customers to make choices (Honkanen, 2010; Olsen, Prebensen, & Larsen, 2009; Honkanen, Olsen, & Myrland, 2004; Kim, Forsythe, Gu, & Moon, 2002; Myrland, Trondsen, Johnston, & Lund, 2000).

From the various definitions and descriptions, food preference is said to be making choices among alternatives or liking something at the expense of the other. Moreover, per the various definitions, food preference may come about through the taste, presentation, texture, flavour, health, nutrition and environmental influences which an individual has during the first or subsequent contact with food. If these choices are not converted into preference, then they remain just accepting what is available. Conversely, all the definitions by the various researchers tend to be saying related things, which make the definition of food preference very much the same with the only difference being what is responsible for this preference.

Foods Preferred by Customers

In order for one to live, one must eat (Ares & Gambaro, 2007). But in all, food is not only eaten to stay alive, but also to express appreciation, sense of belonging, part of family customs, and self-realization (Dalisay, 2012). What is eaten affects human ability to stay healthy, work, be happy, and live well. Knowledge of what to eat and in what quantities are a prerequisite to a healthy and happy life as this knowledge will help in taking the right quantity of food as the average requirements are fixed and depend on measurable characteristics such as age, sex, height, weight and rate of growth (Offei-Ansah, 2013).

According to Rosalin and Soetanto (2006), customers' food preferences involve three main areas of concern: the nutritional requirements, the food habits preferences and the food characteristics. The nutritional requirements relate to customers' awareness of healthy food and demand for a healthier diet. Food characteristics deal with sensory properties such as taste, texture, shape, consistency, and flavour. Customers' preferences for a particular product may vary considerably between individuals, segments, groups and cultures (Ngapo, Dransfield, & Martin, 2007; Nielsen, Bech-Larsen, & Grunert, 1998).

Ross (1995) and Turner, Mayall and Mauthner (1995) have examined children's food preferences in the context of school meals. However, foods such as chips, sausages, beans, beef burgers, fish fingers, pizza, and spaghetti were mentioned by students as favourites. Less popular foods included vegetables such as sweet corn, quiches and pies, and some other food

combinations. Foods, which have been freshly prepared rather than pre-cooked and reheated were also preferred by the students.

Inkumsah (2012), in a study on customer satisfaction in the local Ghanaian restaurant industry, found out that *Fufu* with Light soup/*Nkontomiresoup*/Groundnut soup/*Palmnut* soup was the most preferred and the least preferred was *Kenkey* with fried fish. A current study by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) on traditional food preferences of tourists' in Ghana have found out that 17 of the traditional foods were popular among the international tourists, with "red red" as the most preferred food and the least preferred being *Impotupotu*(Irish stew).

The issue of customers' behaviour is a complicated task, and less simple is a preference for a certain food (Abdullahet al.,2013). Along the process, customers may express their needs and desires and still may act in a totally opposite way. At times, it is possible that people are not even aware of the true motivations behind their buying behaviour and they could react to factors determining last minute changes to their buying decision. Although customers' decisions are relatively easy to notice and quantify, the psycho-physiological processes behind them are very difficult to take into account (Edwards, 2013). Food preferences of customers have positive motivation, expressed by their effective compatibility towards a product, service or trading firm. Preferences can be triggered by the features of the food such as shape, size, taste, colour, and consistency (Ha & Jang, 2010).

According to Abdullahet al.,(2013) and Honkanen and Frewer (2009), customer preference is about making choices among valued options with acceptance indicating a willingness to tolerate the status quo or some less

desirable option. On the other hand, one could interpret the term ‘preference’ to mean evaluative judgement in the sense of liking or disliking an object, which is the most distinctive definition used in psychology (Lichtenstein & Slovic, 2006). Nevertheless, it does not mean that a preference is inevitably constant over time. Preference can be notably modified by decision-making processes, such as choices, even in an unconscious way (Namkung & Jang, 2007).

Philosophers, at some point, have the tendency to limit preference to the concept of choice. However, choice and preference are two radically different concepts: the first one is an action and the other one, a state of mind (Voicu, 2013). Preferences are the result of a long-term relationship between the brand and the consumer, as the latter learns to associate the brand with a symbol and perceives it as having high quality. Following these deep connections created over the course of time, a strong emotion is developed which forms the basis of the preferences, remaining present even in the absence of the friendly symbol or of any other component feature. Although a hardly comprehensible concept, it has been demonstrated that the customers’ preference can be measured effectively and that their study can provide a more thorough understanding of the choices customers make, when they decide to select a particular offer as against the other, or even when they decide to continue the relationship with the offer in time (Fatimah, Boo, Sambasivan, & Salleh, 2011).

Additionally, studies have established various concepts related to preference, such as the concept of the formed preference which underlines the idea that the customers’ preferences are not better defined, but rather formed

along the process of choosing a constructive point of view which suggests that different tasks and contexts highlight different aspects of the options, the customer concentrating on different considerations leading to inconsistent decisions (Novemsky, Dhar, Somonson, & Schwarz, 2007). Knowledge of customer food preferences is especially important with respect to the various activities carried out at the organizational level, necessary for its survival. For instance, if an entrepreneur must determine what features must have the food he wants to sell at a food service establishment must have, the entrepreneur will interview potential buyers asking them to mention the level of preference for each separate feature.

Customer preferences and behaviour represent the basis of the pretesting models for the new products which implies determining the functional relationships between the buyer's opinion concerning a product, testing it and the purchase behaviour (Park, 2004). The level of preferences is one of the variables that need to be taken into account when identifying the strong and weak points of the competitors. By measuring the customer food preferences before and after carrying out an advertising campaign, the entrepreneur may evaluate its success or failure (Kotler, 2008). The preferences for certain products or brands may constitute the theme of a survey supplying information concerning the relative non-consumers attracted since these represent important means of increasing the sales volume up to the maximum limits of market potential (Lichtenstein & Slovic, 2006).

Factors Influencing Customers' Food Preference

Researchers such as Gains (1994), Khan (1981), Randall and Sanjur (1981), Shepherd and Raats (1996), Meiselman, Mastroianni, Buller and Edwards (1999) and Wright, Nancarrow and Kwok (2001) have examined generally the factors that affect food preference and have broadly categorized these factors into three namely individual, food and environmental factors whilst Rozin and Vollmecke (1986) categorized them into biological, cultural and individual factors. From the above categorization, it is clear that all these factors are important to food preferences of individuals as well as the individual, socio-cultural, psychological, and physiological factors are recognized to exert direct or indirect effects on customers' food preferences.

Food characteristics add to sensory attributes such as taste, flavour, price, texture, health and appearance while the environment depicts cultural, social, economic and physical influences. Environmental factors include both internal and external physical elements such as ambience, décor, sanitation, staff and proximity.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Food Preferences

Axelsson (1986) found out that tourists' food consumption and preference at destinations are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Socio-demographic variables like age, sex, occupation, education, the number of family members and the average allowance per month have been found to influence food preferences (Honkanen, Olsen, & Myrland, 2004; Shim, Gehrt, & Holikova, 1999).

Demographic characteristics include sex, age, marital status, the highest level of education, employment status, monthly income, and religion are significant in accounting for variations in customers' food preferences. Tokuc, Ekuklu, Berberoglu, Bilge and Dedeler (2009) affirm that age, sex, marital status, educational level, occupation, and household income largely influence the food preferences of customers in food service establishments and these factors are recognized to be important variables in explaining variations in food consumption in different contexts (Furst, Connors, Bisgni, Sobal, & Falk, 1996; Rotkovitz, 2004). Kim, Kim, and Kandampully, (2009) also recognized gender, age, and education as three socio-demographic variables that affect customers' local food consumption. In the study conducted by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), it was found out that with the exception of marital status all other socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, education and religion) have a significant relationship with tourists' preference for traditional foods in Ghana.

Sex is a physiological state that influences food preferences. Differences in food preferences between males and females have been reported (Einstein & Hornstein, 1970; Wyant & Meiselman, 1984). Sex is known to influence food choices or perceptions about food (Heideman & Jonge, 1998; Monteleone, Frewer, Wakeling, & Mela, 1998). Differences in eating habits between males and females exist in many countries. Females are known to be more nutrition conscious than their male counterparts, this affirmed in a study on starchy food by Monteleone, et al. and fat spread by Bower, Saadat, and Whitten (2003) established preferential differences between males and females.

In both studies, the food preferences of females were noted to be health - related. Sex has an impact on the assessment of quality and the physical environment, and these gender differences are linked up to the influence of stereotype during gender role socialization (Ganesan-Lim, Russel-Bennet, & Dagger, 2008). Studies have shown that women prefer fruits and vegetables more than men (Kleynhans, 2003). However, other studies indicate that differences in eating habits including food preferences between the sexes are not marked in the Western culture except for quantity and caloric intake (Sim, 2009). Men pay less attention to sales employees in making purchase decisions whilst women rely more heavily on the environment and service evaluation (Laroche, Saad, Cleveland, & Browne, 2000). Rozin (2006) points out that meat avoidance, weight concerns, and preference for low-calorie foods are higher in women in the USA. In particular, females were found to be more interested in and excited about tasting local food when on holiday.

Age is described as a powerful determinant of customers' behaviour which has an individual purchasing ability and preference (Neal, Quester, & Hawkins, 2002). Age is known not to influence only the quantities of food eaten, but also the types of food and eating place (Amuquandoh, 2011). According to Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), eating, including individual food preferences, has been perceived to change with age, thus from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Ganesan-Lim, Russel-Bennet and Dagger (2008:8) ascertain that age has a significant effect on the assessment made by customers but gender and income have no main significance. Tse and Crotts (2005) found that customers' age was negatively correlated with the number and range of their culinary explorations.

Reynolds and Hwang (2006) have observed that generation X and Y born from 1965-1976 and 1977-1994 respectively, are noted for frequent eating out whilst older consumers shy away from trying new cuisine but visit the food service industry as a form of socialization. Kleynhans (2003) as well explains that the younger generations of customers eat out a lot because they conveniently follow food trends and try new ones. Similarly, a study by Settembre (2013) confirms that people aged between 18-29 years eat outside the home. Lakos (2013) posited that two main groups of customers who are aged between 21-30 years (35%) and 31-40 years (31%) eat outside the home more frequently and the figure keeps dropping as people advance in age. This suggests that older customers may consume a narrower range of foods available at a destination. Older respondents and interviews with higher education level were found to be more concerned about health and had a stronger desire to understand and experience foreign cultures through local food consumption.

It is established that individuals with higher income levels mostly have higher education levels and make different choices from those with lower income as well as education (Ganesan-Lim, et al., 2008). Kivela and Crotts (2006) contend that people with a higher education level might have a higher social-status occupation and can be older. Due to education, people learn a lot about foods, as foods are subject to taboos and customs, and people travel more and try other traditional foods because of the knowledge they have about them. Educational levels have been found to be related to nutrition knowledge by a number of investigators (O'Dennell, 1994; Woolcott, Kawash, & Sabry, 1981).

Culture and religion have long been recognized as major socio-demographic factors affecting general food consumption (McKercher & Chow, 2001). Culture and religion are major factors affecting the types of substances that a person considers appropriate to eat (Atkins & Bowler, 2001; Chang, et al., 2010). It defines how food is divided into 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable', and 'good' or 'bad' within a particular group (Makela, 2000).

Culture and religion further impacts which foods and food potentials are acceptable in terms of their sensory properties (Prescott, Young, O'Neill, Yau, & Stevens, 2002). This process is revealed in the existence of culturally specific 'flavour principles'. According to Rozin (2006), basic foods, cooking techniques, and flavour principles are three major factors that segregate a cuisine and flavour principles refer to the distinctive seasoning groupings which characterize many cuisines.

Religion is also considered as decisive determinants of food choice and consumption (Khan, 1981). Religious beliefs have an influence on food consumption when certain foods are forbidden (e.g., Islam, Judaism), precise preparation methods are required (e.g., Halal, kosher), or fasting or feasting practices are observed [e.g., Ramadan] (Packard & McWilliams, 1993). These observed practices and limits can result in stable and rigid food habits (Khan, 1981) and thus they do not just affect food consumption in customers' home settings, but also in the context of tourism (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Islamic teachings about eating behaviour have categorized food broadly into halal (permissible) and haram (prohibited). It is obligatory that all Muslims eat only halal food, even when they are travelling in foreign destinations (Bon &

Hussain, 2010). The influences of culture and religion on customer food consumption have been recognized by a number of hospitality/tourism studies.

Fox (2007) observed that Japanese, French, and Italian customers avoided local food in the host destination and always preferred to eat their own cuisine, whereas American consumers were perceived to have a slight preference for local food in the host destination. Likewise, March (1997) study, which involved interviews with various stakeholders in the travel industry, identified a number of behavioural similarities and differences among customers who originated from five Asian outbound markets (Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand). One of the behavioural differences was food consumption pattern, which was found to be influenced by cultural or religious factors.

Hassan and Hall (2003) also found out that a vast proportion (82%) of Muslim customers visiting New Zealand would always look for halal food when travelling in New Zealand, and 39.6 percent stated that they always prepared their own meals due to a lack of knowledge of the availability of halal food in New Zealand. Alternatively, Cohen and Avieli (2004, p. 760) suggest that 'while on tour, many Israelis tend to relax their avoidance of non-kosher food, but remain extremely worried about hygiene and about culturally unacceptable food such as a dog, cat, and reptile meat'. This resounds with Rotkowitz (2004) argument that given the transient nature of tourism, even kosher-observant customers might take on greater psychological openness to experimenting with new foods or food ways when on holiday.

According to March (1997; p. 234), 'Muslims and Indonesians require specially prepared halal food, while Koreans have a strong preference for their

own cuisine.’ In a study on the role of food service in vacation choice, Sheldon and Fox (1988) found that Japanese customers tended to be less willing to try new cuisines compared with U.S. and Canadian customers when holidaying in Hawaii. Torres (2002) found discernible differences in food consumption and preferences amongst Yucatan customers of different nationalities and customer types. She found that while there was considerable demand for Mexican food, tropical fruits, and organic foods among all customers in the sample, demand appeared to be greater amongst non-American and ‘offbeat’ customers.

Many of the above studies support Cohen and Avieli’s (2004, p. 775) contention that ‘Asians abroad tend to be less disposed than Westerners to partake of the food of “others”, and are more dependent than the latter on establishments providing their own national cuisines.’ Despite the preliminary evidence presented above, relatively little is known about the specific aspects culture and religion have impacted food consumption in tourism. Until recently, a number of tourism studies have shed more light on the topic. For example, Tse and Crotts (2005) propose a link between customer culinary choice and their national culture.

On the other hand, Chang et al. (2010) found that customers’ culture-specific ‘core eating behaviour’ is a crucial factor affecting their food preferences while on holiday. Customers are generally more willing to accept changes in ‘secondary’ foods (i.e., Foods eaten widely and often, but not daily) and ‘peripheral’ foods (i.e., Foods eaten sporadically) on holiday, yet tend to remain steadfast to ‘core’ foods (i.e., Staples that are consumed almost daily). This supports the core and peripheral foods model in food consumption

literature Kittler and Sucher (2004) which suggests that core foods are closely associated with a culture and face the biggest resistance to be changed or modified. Furthermore, Chang, Kivela, and Mak (2011) found that customers' own food culture can exert a great deal of influence on their perceptions and evaluation of foreign food, particularly in terms of flavour and cooking method. The finding highlights the importance of understanding the 'cultural distance' (McKercher & Chow, 2001) and culturally-specific 'flavour principles' between customers' native food culture and the host food culture in affecting customer food consumption.

In elaborating a 'grammar of foods', Santich (2007) emphasizes the signifying power of food. Thus, certain foods can be used to signify concepts such as tradition, modernity, masculinity and femininity. Accordingly, food, to a certain extent, reflects the social status and self-identity of an individual. Park (2004) also emphasizes that the differences in food preferences are related to social class. For example, middle-class individuals who are rich in 'cultural capital' tend to be keen to cultivate 'taste' for exotic and foreign foods to maintain distinctiveness.

The Cultural capital theory is particularly germane to explaining social class differences in food consumption behaviours in tourism. In a recent study, Chang et al. (2010) found that middle-class Chinese customers considered eating Australian local food would enable them to acquire new food knowledge so that they could have the capacity to discuss and evaluate Australian food. Accordingly, other than socioeconomic and demographic status, social class, and cultural capital are important concepts in understanding the variations in customers' food consumption behaviours.

Food Characteristics and Food Preferences

Food is described as the most basic and most important factor and as an integral part of the overall experience in the food service industry (Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Niles, 2009). International survey data disclose that fresh-tasting, natural, home-cooked tastes are driving consumer demand around the world and not just in mature food service establishments (Abdullah, Hamali, & Abdurahman, 2011). In countries as varied as Nigeria, Brazil, Poland and China authentic and the natural-tasting food is the customer's favourite. In a recent survey focused on urban customers' taste preferences, attitudes and behaviours, data revealed that more than half (55%) believe a 'fresh or natural' flavour is what makes food taste delicious, followed by 'tastes as if it was made at home' (Bon & Hussain, 2010). This was evidenced strongly by urban customers living in China while their counterparts in Brazil said they first and foremost wanted food that 'tastes as if it were made at home' (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). These desires for fresh, natural or home-made tastes is one of the most important challenges for food producers in the face of consumer behaviour, as nearly two-thirds (64%) of urban consumers report they are using the same amount of or more processed food at home than they were 3 years ago and actively seek out food that meets their taste and health requirements (Bon & Hussain, 2010).

Food taste is regarded as the most important element of food attributes in several studies (Josiam & Monteiro, 2004; Tunsu, 2000). Taste is perceived as a core element in food that greatly influences customer intentions to purchase (Autun, Frash, Costen, & Runyan, 2010). Food is described tasty when the freshness is associated with the crispness, juiciness, and aroma

(Namkung & Jang, 2008). The results of a study by Sukalakamala and Boyce (2007) indicated that consumers of Thai restaurants considered unique tastes and authentic ingredients as the most important components of their authentic dining experiences. Similarly, Gummeson, Jonsson, Conner and Svensson (1996), Ross, (1995) and Turner, Mayall, and Mauthner (1995) found that personal preferences for taste, texture, and appearance of the food had a much greater influence on the food service establishments. In similar studies, Berge, Jonsson, and Conner (2000) argued that taste and distaste are more important for younger consumers while Roininen, Lähteenmäki, and Tourila, (1999) concluded that elderly people are more concerned about nutrition and health.

Taste is typically found to be the most, or amongst the most, important determinants of food choice (Lee, Frederick, & Ariely, 2006). Taste, in turn, is enhanced with ingredients that are over consumed by most customers – sweeteners, salt and fat (Robinson, Borzekowski, Matheson, & Kraemer, 2007). Customers may even have expectations that unhealthy food (i.e. food high in fat, sweeteners and salt) tastes better. Raghunathan, Walker Naylor and Hoyer (2006) show that customers' experienced taste pleasantness of food is higher for food portrayed as unhealthy, compared to the same food which is not portrayed as unhealthy. Favourably descriptive menu names can increase sensory perceptions of appearance and taste just as they have been shown to influence food sales, food service attitudes and repurchase intentions (Kim et al. 2009). Previous studies have shown that descriptive names improved sales and improved expectations related to the food and the food service establishment (Wansink, Painter, & Ittersum, 2001).

Price is the amount of money charged for a product, a competitive tool and a major deciding factor influencing customers' purchase (Gregoire, 2013). Namasivayam (2004) observed that the fairness of the price has been identified as one psychological factor that influences consumers' reaction and decision to purchase. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreaut (1990) noted that the value for money from one food service industry to another or from one customer to another and also it massively affects a customer's choice, as well as the number of times food service industry 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, ambience, and service. It was also emphasized by Cousins, Foskett and Gillespie (2002) that customers will purchase a food not only because of the food and service, but also value for the money spent on the food.

Individual food preference is also affected by price (Popkin, Duffey, & Gordon-Larsen, 2005). Several scholars have indicated price as a factor influencing customer preference (Huber, Hermann, & Wricke, 2001; Kara, Kaynak, & Kucukemiroglu, 1995; Palazon & Delgado, 2009). Available literature also shows that price is a concern to individuals (Koo, Tao, & Yeung, 1999). Concurrently, Pedraja and Yague (2001) found that customers searched for information about a food service outlet, especially where there were price differences among outlets. In addition, studies conducted on adults and adolescents indicate price as one of the most influential factors determining food choice, second only to taste (Shannon, Story, Fulkerson, & French, 2002).

Appearance and presentation refer to the way food is decorated and attractive garnish to please the eye (Namkung& Jang, 2008). Namkung& Jang (2007) found that presentation was a significant contributor among food quality attributes in determining customer satisfaction in restaurants. The final presentation of food, whether on a plate, cafeteria counter, serving tray and buffet table, or in a display case or takeout package is an important factor in the final selection of the item. Colours have a psychological impact on customers (Rosalin & Soetanto, 2006). They emphasize the variety available on the selection and serve as an eye appeal and appetite stimulator. Garnishing, plate decorations, and attractive colour displays add colour and should also be considered in menu planning (Rosalin&Soetanto).

The texture and shape of foods also affect customers' preferences. "Soft", "hard", "crispy", "crunchy", "chewy", "smooth", "brittle", and "granny" are some of the adjectives used to describe food texture (Rosalin & Soetanto, 2006). A desirable blend of flavours is essential for creating variety in the menu. Foods can have sweet, sour, bitter, or salty flavours, which can be present alone or in combination (Robinson et al. 2007).

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 assistance or strength to prepare meals by themselves, especially the ones that require long – standing and intensive labour in preparation opt to eat healthy food outside their homes. Health reasons for eating out is based on the nutritional and nourishing food options that are available to customers as preferences. According to Namkung and Jang (2008) many customers who patronise food service establishments are health conscious, thus, the

availability of healthy food items is becoming progressively a more considering factor in customer food preferences. Men and women for the fear of eating late which has a health implication not only to the patronage of food service establishments has but prioritize it so they can avoid cooking and eating late in the evening after close of work (Davis , Lockwood, Alcott, & Pantelidis, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

Model of food preferences

The model of food preferences was propounded by Randall and Sanjur (1981). According to the proponents, factors influencing food preferences comprise the individual, the food, and the environment. Individual characteristics are attitudes, age, sex, education, income, nutrition knowledge, cooking skill, creativity, the role of eating that item, and health. The characteristics of the food are the combination of taste, appearance, texture, price, food type, preparation method, style, season and food.

The characteristics of the environment are seasoned, accommodation, mobility, and degree of urbanization, the household, and the family level. Food at the destination presents factors such as sensory attributes, food content, cooking methods (Chang et al., 2010; Cohen &Avieli, 2004).

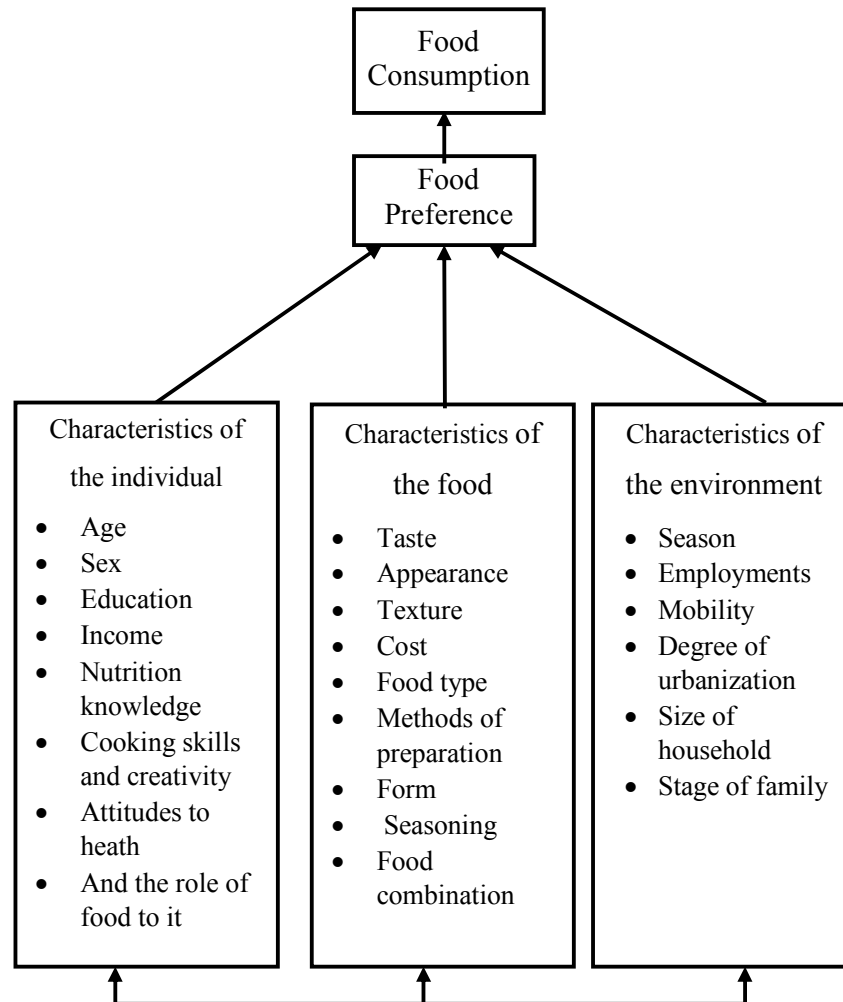


Figure 4: Model of Food Preferences

Source: Randall and Sanjur (1981)

The destination environment contributes factors such as gastronomic image/identity, marketing communications, service encounter and services (Chang et al., 2011; Fox, 2007; Harrington, 2005). Arguably, these factors can be more complex than food consumption in home settings, since there is a substantial change in both the ‘food’ and the ‘environment’ components. Above all, tourists’ former attitude towards food and eating might change, and a different set of motivations might influence their preferences and choice of

food in the new and unfamiliar environment. The theory is considered relevant to the study as it outlines some of the factors which have been indicated by the present study relating to food preference such as socio-demographics, food, and restaurant environment.

Weakness Model Food Preferences

Randall and Sanjur (1981) identified some factors as food characteristics. These factors did not include price of food which according to Gregoire (2013) is a major factor influencing food choice. Randal and Sanjur identified cost but it can be argued that the price of food is not only determined by the cost of production but other factors such as demand for food, season of the year among others. Namasivayam (2004) is of the view that the fairness in price of food is a psychological factor that influences consumers' reaction and decision. Popkin, Duffey and Gordon-Larsen (2005) concludes individual food preference is affected by price.

Secondly, the model ignored health, which is an essential food characteristic. According to Namkung and Jang (2008) the availability of healthy food items is progressively attracting more consideration in customer food preferences. Customers are becoming health conscious especially in the selection of food. Furthermore the model did not include flavour though it can be said the consumers would prefer food with desirable blend of flavours. Rozin (2006) identified flavour as one of the three main principles that segregate food. The flavour of the food whether sweet, sour or bitter (Robinson et al. 2007) would affect repeat visit and word of mouth advertisement.

In relation to socio-demographic characteristics the model did not include religion and ethnicity, the two main factors that influences culture of a group of people. Religion and culture (ethnicity) are considered as decisive determinants of food choice and consumption (McKercher& Chow, 2001; Khan 1981). Religious beliefs have an influence on food consumption of foods; some foods are forbidden by certain religion. Culture and religion affects types of substances that a person considers appropriate to eat (Atkins & Bowler, 2001; Chang, et al., 2010). They define whether food is described as 'good' or 'bad' within a particular group (Makela, 2000).

Model of Factors Influencing Food Preferences

The study adapts the Model of Food Preferences by Randall and Sanjur (1981) as the conceptual framework. Appearance, food type, food combination, form and seasoning were part of the food characteristics in the original model but were taken out in this conceptual framework as those variables do not have a bearing on the current study.

Conversely, presentation of food, health, texture, nutrition and flavour have been added to the food characteristics based on the literature. The sub-heading 'characteristics of individual' has been replaced with socio-demographic characteristics such as nutrition knowledge, cooking skills/creativity and attitudes to health and the food were replaced by religion, occupation, marital status, and ethnicity the factors identified in the weakness has been included in the model as evident Fig.(5). Regarding the environmental factors, season, employment, mobility, the degree of urbanization and size of household was removed as those variables do not have

any bearing on this study. The end result of the model of food preference is food consumption. In the present study, however, the end result is food preference.

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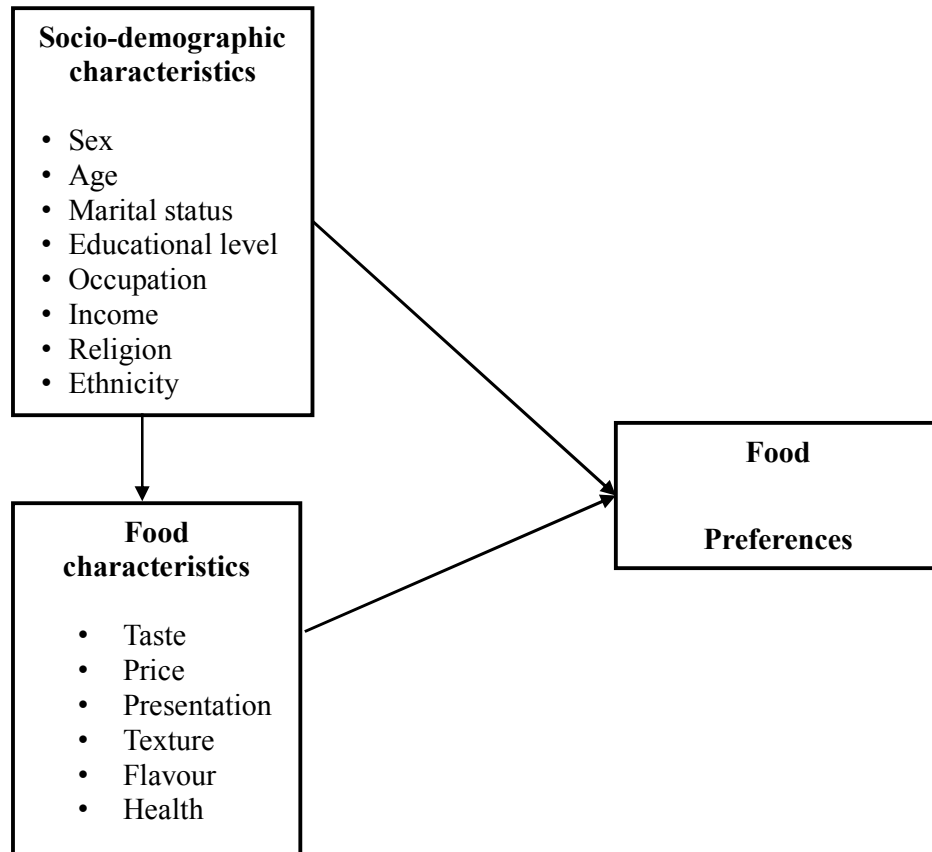


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework

Source: Adapted from Randall and Sanjur (1981)

In essence, the conceptual framework underpins the study in the comprehension of the relationship of socio-demographic characteristics on customers' preferences of foods provided by food service establishments. Moreover, the conceptual framework helps the research in ascertaining the relationship of food characteristics (taste, price, presentation, texture, flavour,

health, nutrition) as either direct or proximate determinants of food preferences of customers in the food service establishments in Ho.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of theories and models relating to the topic and adapted the model of Randall and Sanjur (1981). Relevant literature was also reviewed on issues concerning food preferences of customers describing their socio-demographic and food characteristics, as well as looked at foods preferred by customers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that were followed in carrying out the study. It gives a description of the study area, the research design, sources of data and the target population. It further explains how the sample size of the study was determined and the sampling procedures/techniques employed; the research instruments, pre-testing and the procedures that were followed in data collection, processing, and analysis as well as its presentation. Ethical considerations were also discussed.

The Study Area

The study area is Ho, the capital city of the Volta Region of Ghana. It lies between Mount Adaklu and Mount Galenukui (Togo Atakora Range) and is the sixteenth most populous settlement in Ghana. It has a population of 96,213 people (GSS, 2010). Ho is now a Municipality established by a Legislative Instrument L.I 2074 of 2012. It has four districts namely, Agortime – Ziope, Ho Central, Adaklu- Anyigbe, and Ho West. The Municipality has Ho as its capital, which also serves as the capital and economic hub of the Volta Region. It shares boundaries with Adaklu and Agortime-Ziope Districts to the South, Ho West District to the North and West and the Republic of Togo to the East. Its total land area is 2,361 square kilometers thus representing 11.5 percent of the region's total land area.

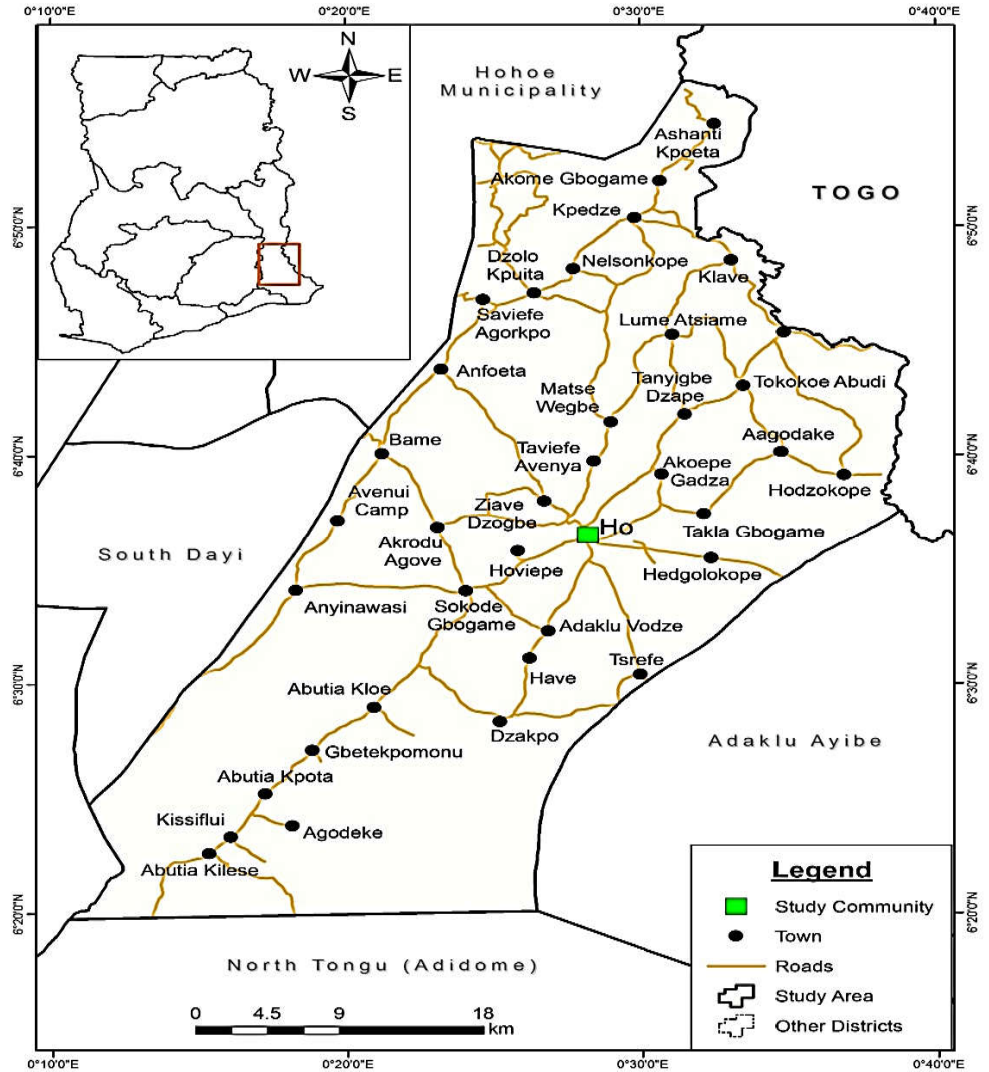


Figure 6: Map of Ho, the Study Area

Source: Remote sensing and cartography unit, Department of Geography and Regional planning, University of Cape Coast, (2015).

The Municipality has a total of 245 educational institutions which is made up of 81 pre-schools, 143 Basic schools, 12 Second Cycle institutions of which 5 are privately owned. The Municipality also has 1 Nursing training college, 1 Polytechnic, 1 School of Hygiene and 1 Public University and 2 Private University.

Tourist attractions within Ho are characterized under natural, historic and archaeological sites as well as cultural heritage. The tourist attractions include; waterfalls, ancient colonial buildings, ancestral caves, music, and dance, as well as traditional festivals (Ho Municipal Assembly, 2015).

Historically, Ho can boast of an ancient German cemetery, ancient European church bell and old German buildings(Ho Municipality, 2015). Like many of the districts in the Region, Ho celebrates a variety of festivals, prominent among them is the Asogli Yam Festival celebrated annually by the people of Asogli State to thank God and the gods for a bumper harvest of yam. The SaSa Festival is also celebrated by the Chiefs and people of Akrofu to commemorate their migration from Notsie in Togo to their present location. ZendoGlimetsoza is also celebrated annually by the people of Klefe and four other related communities Klikor, Kpeve, Tsorxor and Tsibu (Ho Municipality, 2015).

Food Service Establishments in Ho Municipality

The Municipality has a good number of restaurants ranging from Hotel and Guest House restaurant to stand alone restaurant which prepare Ghanaian and Continental dishes. Notable among the stand alone restaurants are: West Wing Restaurant, Pedees, Pleasure Gardens, KCS, Goldfinger Restaurant, McCharley Restaurant, White House, Home Made Restaurant, Talk of the Town and Red Dot Restaurant. Other local chop bars are Agbenorxevi Chop bar, Hill view, Kaneawope, Mothers Inn, Da Abra, among others (Ho Municipal Assembly, 2014). These facilities provide a varying range of dishes to attract consumers from within and around the municipalities. Dishes offered

and the varying prices gives a fair idea of the target market of each food service establishment either upscale or regular clients.

Research Philosophy

The philosophical underpinning for this research is positivism. Positivism is based on the realization through experience which aims at explaining social phenomena (Sarantakos, 2012). The positivist aspect believe reality is stable, can be observed and described from an objective point without interfering in the phenomenon being studied (Levin, 1988). Proponents of this perspective have a preference for quantitative data and often use surveys, experiments, and statistics to inquire about the phenomenon. In this study, the quantitative method will be employed. The research draws a sample form the population of interest, test hypotheses and makes generalization taking into consideration responses from data. Questionnaire which is quantitative instrument of data collection was employed. According to Burns and Bush (2006), quantitative research involves the use of structural questions in which the respondents' options have been predetermined and a large number of respondents are involved. Therefore, through the use of the quantitative method, the relationship between dependent and independent variables can be examined.

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive research design which describes and interprets what exists (Rosalin&Soetanto, 2006; Payne & Payne, 2004; Punch, 2003). According to Zikmund, Babin, &Carr (2010), descriptive research is used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. According

to Creswell (2003), a descriptive study design is concerned with conditions or inter-relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, and trends that are developing. It describes the situation or the phenomenon as it exists and does not focus on identifying “causes”. Unlike the explanatory research design which focuses on “why” questions, descriptive research focuses on “what” questions with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Creswell, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005). Descriptive research design does not allow for any manipulation of the key variables but describe and interpret what exist (Amedahe, 2002). The study basically seeks to identify the foods preferred by customers and also to analyze customers’ perception of characteristics of foods offered by the food service establishments.

Sources of Data/ Information

The main sources of data for the study were primary and secondary. Primary data were collected from customers who patronize the selected food service establishments in Ho through the use of questionnaires. Secondary information was sourced from journals, books, as well as from published and unpublished documents such as books, journals, articles and the internet and Ghana Tourism Authority which included the list of registered food service establishments in Ho.

Study Population

The target population for the study consisted of all customers who patronize the selected food service establishments in the month of March and April 2016.

Sampling Procedure

As it is impossible to collect data from all customers who were visiting the selected food service establishments, there was a need, therefore, to use an appropriate sample for the study. The sample size was calculated based on the formula required for accuracy in estimating proportions. This was done by considering the standard normal deviation set at 1.96 which corresponds to 95% confidence level, the percentage of picking a choice or response was 50%, which is equal to 0.5, and the confidential interval of $(0.05 = \pm 5)$.

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

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

p = percentage picking a choice of response

c = confidence interval

$$n = 1.96^2 (0.5) (1-0.5) / 0.05^2$$

$$1.96^2 (0.5) (0.5) / 0.05^2$$

$$3.84 \times 0.25 / 0.0025$$

$$0.96 / 0.0025$$

Sample size (n) = 384

A total of ten (10) food service establishments were registered in Ho as evident in the list from GTA. All the ten (10) food service establishments were considered for the study as the number was sizable. The monthly and daily average covers were solicited from the food service establishments. The selected food service establishments had different numbers of guests catered for each day. The daily covers were put together and divided by the number of

days they had operated within one month. The expected covers ranged from 50 – 150 per day. The breakdown is presented in Table 1 showing each food service establishment's cover and sample to be collected.

Table 1-*Sample size of Food Service Establishments*

| Establishments | Average daily Covers | Sample allocated |
|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| A | 50 | 21 |
| B | 60 | 25 |
| C | 120 | 49 |
| D | 100 | 41 |
| E | 70 | 29 |
| F | 100 | 41 |
| G | 80 | 33 |
| H | 130 | 54 |
| I | 150 | 62 |
| J | 70 | 29 |
| Total | 930 | 384 |

Source: Reconnaissance survey, 2015

A probability sampling method was then used to select respondents for the study. The technique that was employed is the systematic sampling, which is often employed in studies on consumer attitudes (Sekaran, 2003). Systematic sampling was used to select respondents by systematically selecting every n th element. This method is useful in situations where the population elements arrive at a certain location over time (Maree, 2005). As

such, respondents were selected by systematically choosing every third customer (this was calculated by dividing the total population by the sample size) who walked into the food service establishments until the sample size for a particular food service establishment was reached. The first customer was selected after which every third (3rd) customer was also selected. The allocation of a sample size to each food service establishment was based on the average daily covers (Table 1).

Research Instrument

The instrument used to collect data for the study was a questionnaire. A questionnaire was used because it guarantees easy data collection and also makes it efficient for collecting statistically quantifiable data in social science research (Twumasi, 2001). The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended items for the study. Close-ended questions allowed respondents to choose from possible answers. The open-ended questions gave respondents the opportunity to provide additional information which was relevant to the study.

The questionnaire was in three sections, section A looked at food characteristics relationship to customers' food preferences. This section (A) sought to find out the factors that relate customers' food preferences and customers' perceptions of food characteristics about foods offered by the establishments. It was purely close-ended; the variables were listed and respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale. Scale 1.0 -1.49 *strongly disagree*, 1.5-2.49 *disagree*, 2.5- 3.49 *neutral*, 3.5- 4.49 *agree*, 4.5- 5.0 *strongly agree*.

Section (B) looked at foods preferred by customers in the food service outlets. This section included both open-ended and close-ended questions. It was on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not preferred*, 2 = *least preferred*, 3 = *neutral* and 4 = *preferred*, 5 = *most preferred*).

The last section (C) looked at socio-demographic characteristics of customers'. These were sex, age, marital status, educational level, employment status, religion, income, and ethnicity.

Recruitment of Field Assistant

Three field assistants were recruited and trained on the procedures for instrument administration and on field work ethics. The selection of field assistants was based on their ability to read and write and to speak Ewe as that is the major language spoken by the people of the Volta Region. The selected field assistants were taken through a training exercise to equip them and how to approach respondents impartially so that they would not influence the responses the respondents provide. They were also taught how to interpret the questions to customers. The researcher and field assistants agreed on how the questions should be interpreted.

Pre-testing of Instrument

The questionnaire was pre-tested from the 7th to 8th of March, 2016. Twenty respondents were systematically selected from four food service establishments in Cape Coast.

This pre-testing exercise helped the researcher to assess the validity of the questionnaire. After collecting the data, the questionnaires were

analysed to assess whether they were reliable and valid, by conducting reliability test to get the Cronbach's alpha to determine the questions which are strong and weak. Concerns raised by the respondents were duly noted. After the pre-testing, the necessary modifications were made, before the actual fieldwork began.

Data Collection Procedures

The fieldwork commenced on the 17th of March, 2016 and ended on 23rd of April, 2016. Phone calls and personal visits were made to seek permission from managers and manageress of the selected food service establishments before the commencement of the survey. The researcher personally visited all the 10 selected food service establishments with two field assistants. About 70% of the questionnaires were self-administered, whilst the remaining 30% were administered with the help of the field assistants. This was useful to those who were illiterates as the questions had to be translated into their convenient languages before the answer provided is written down on behalf of the respondents.

The distribution of the questionnaires took place each day between the hours of 10:00 am and 5:00pm. On arrival to each food service establishment, the researcher officially introduced herself again to the supervisors before she was introduced to the waiters and waitresses. The researcher positioned herself at a vantage point to enable the data to be collected more conveniently.

The consent of selected customers was sought before the questionnaire was administered. They were approached at their tables and were informed about the study. Some answered before eating while others did that after

eating and handed the completed questionnaires over before exiting the food service establishment. However, in some few instances, customers returned the questionnaires without responding to the questions. In all, out of 384 questionnaires distributed, 350 were completely filled and were useful for the data analysis. This represents a response rate of 91 percent.

Problems Encountered in the Field

A manager of one of the selected food service establishments halted the administering of the questionnaire after the researcher had started, insisting that it will distract her customers and that the researcher should come another day. Also, one of the selected food service establishments was under renovation, as such the facility was not operating. But one of the selected food service establishments had another branch, therefore, visits were made to that establishment to make up for the ten food service establishments needed.

Also, some respondents were reluctant to complete the questionnaires, whilst others complained about the length of the questionnaire. In addition, some respondents were illiterate as such the questionnaire must be translated into the local dialect (Ewe) which took a longer time in the completion of a questionnaire set.

Data Analysis

The data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) version 21 after which descriptive analysis was done on the background characteristics of respondents, specifically using percentages and frequencies.

Chi-square test of goodness-of-fit was conducted to examine the relationship between customers' socio-demographic and food characteristics and food preferences. These tools were used to analyse these data because of their proven effectiveness in food – related research.

Ethical Issues

The ethical dimensions of every research and how they are addressed are very important. This research considered the issues of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Leary (2008) and Neuman (2007) conceived that researchers must not coerce respondents into participating in studies, thus protecting their rights is key in every study. In other words, participation must be voluntary at all times. Informed consent was therefore sought from respondents and facility owners before undertaking the research. Provision of adequate information about the study was, therefore, important to enable the participants to decide whether they want to take part or not (Seymour & Skilbeck, 2002).

Secondly, the issue of anonymity was also addressed. Anonymity protects privacy by not disclosing a participant's identity after the information is gathered (Babbie, 2007). This was guaranteed when the names of the participants were not requested for or written on the instrument used as well as the names of food service establishments. Finally, confidentiality was ensured since the researcher did not share or discuss any information with a third party. Respondents were equally made aware of the fact that information provided was for academic purposes and thus it will remain autonomous which also reformed their sincerity in their responses.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology used for the study and the procedures that were followed to collect data from the field. In brief, it looked at the research philosophy, research design, sources of data, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, pre-testing, data collection and data processing and analysis. Possible challenges encountered on the field. The concluding part of the chapter elaborated on the ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter presents the results and discussion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of data collected from customers of food service establishments in Ho. Topics discussed comprise; the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, food preferred by customers, the relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences and the relationship between food characteristics and customers' food preferences and lastly customers' perception of food characteristics about food offered by the food service establishments. Discussions are also conducted based on the key findings made in juxtaposition to studies already conducted on the topic.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents included in the study were; age, sex, and marital status, educational level, occupation, monthly income, and ethnicity. Descriptive variables which were obtained from the socio-demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Sex has been noted to relate to food preferences of people who patronise food service establishments (Amuquandoh&Asafo-Adjei, 2013). It was realised that while 59.4 percent of the respondents were males, 40.6 percent were females. This finding confirms Petzer and Mackay's (2014) assertion that males patronise foods outside of the home more than females.

Age has been described as an important element of customers' behaviour (Neal et al. 2002).

The mean age of the respondents was 49 years. Respondents who were in their 20s, 30s and 40s also constituted 38 percent, 28 percent, and 22.9 percent respectively. The findings, therefore, show that 71.8 percent of the respondents were young; 40 years and below. This result affirms Kleynhans's (2003) findings that younger generations eat out a lot because they conveniently follow food trends and try new ones. It also affirms postulations of Settembre (2013) that people aged 18-29 years eat outside the home most of the time.

As regards the marital status of respondents, the study further showed that 50 percent of the respondents had never been married, those who were married constituted 45.7 percent while those who were separated or widowed were 4.3 percent. From the results, it was realised that 80.9 percent of the respondents had a tertiary education. This finding is in consonance with Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), O'Dennell (1994) and Woolcott, Kawash, and Sabry's (1981) findings that most customers of food service establishments are people who have higher levels of education.

In terms of the level of management, 43.7 percent were in managerial positions while 5.2 percent were self-employed. Students also constituted 21.1 percent while those involved in sales formed 16.9 percent. Respondents who earned monthly incomes of less than GH 500 formed 27.7 percent, followed by respondents who earned GH 1500 – 1499 with 25.1 percent and those above GH 4500 with 5.1.

Table 2 -*Socio – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 350)*

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 208 | 59.4 |
| Female | 142 | 40.6 |
| Age | | |
| < 20 | 17 | 4.9 |
| 20 – 29 | 133 | 38.0 |
| 30 – 39 | 101 | 28.9 |
| 40 – 49 | 80 | 22.9 |
| 50 – 59 | 14 | 4.0 |
| 60 + | 5 | 1.4 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Never married | 175 | 50.0 |
| Married | 160 | 45.7 |
| Separated/widowed | 15 | 4.3 |
| Educational Level | | |
| Primary | 11 | 3.1 |
| Secondary/technical | 56 | 16.0 |
| Tertiary | 283 | 80.9 |
| Occupation | | |
| Students | 74 | 21.1 |
| Managerial | 153 | 43.7 |
| Clerical | 45 | 12.9 |
| Sales | 59 | 16.9 |
| Self employed | 19 | 5.4 |
| Income (GH ₵) | | |
| <500 | 97 | 27.7 |
| 500-1499 | 88 | 25.1 |
| 1500- 2499 | 85 | 24.3 |
| 2500- 3499 | 39 | 11.1 |
| 3500- 4499 | 23 | 6.6 |
| >4500 | 18 | 5.1 |
| Religion | | |
| Christian | 291 | 83.1 |
| Muslim | 59 | 16.9 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Ga/Dangme | 59 | 16.9 |
| Akan | 94 | 26.9 |
| Ewe | 185 | 52.9 |
| Others | 12 | 3.4 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Christianity was the most dominant religion among the respondents (83.1%), who were found to be mainly Ewes (52.9%). A significant proportion were also Akans, constituting 26.9 percent and Ga/Dangme formed 16.9

percent. The fact that majority of the respondents were Ewes may be due to the fact that Ho is the capital of the Volta Region, an indigenous Ewe community and as such had more Ewes visiting the food service establishment to access their services.

Foods Preferred by Customers

The food preferences of respondents were examined using 10 foods made up of both local and continental dishes (Table 3). The study revealed that the five most preferred foods among the respondents were *Banku* with okro soup (38.8%), *Banku* with grilled tilapia (26.6%), *Fufu* with soup (19.7%), French fries with grilled chicken (3.7%), and *Waakye* (3.1%). The menu items which were least preferred are pizza (2.3 %), red red and *kenkey* and fried fish (1.7 %), rice with fried chicken (1.4 %) and *ampesi* with *palava* sauce (0.9 %) as indicated in Table 3. This result affirms a study by Inkumsah (2012) which shows *Kenkey* and fried fish to be least preferred foods by consumers in Accra, Ghana. Respondents in this study also mostly preferred *Fufu* and *Banku* probably due to the foods' appeal in terms of taste, texture, and flavour as posited by Khan (1981), Randall and Sanjur (1981), Nielson et al. (1988), Rosalin and Soetanto (2006), Ngapo et al. (2007) and Wright et al. (2001). *Banku* is the staple food of the Ewes and Ho is the Capital of the Volta Region, which is predominantly made up of Ewes. It was therefore not surprising that many of them had *Banku* as their most preferred food. Again it was not surprising that *Fufu* with soup was among the five most preferred foods as Akans formed the second largest population surveyed for the study. *Ampesi* with *Palava* sauce was the least preferred food among the respondents.

This may be due to the fact that its preparation does not take long periods to do and as such, people see no reason for patronising them at the food service establishments. Moreover, it is not a staple food of the people of the Volta Region/Ho and this could explain the lack of preference for that food among the respondents. It also props the findings of Ngapo et al. (2007) that customers' preferences for a particular product vary considerably among individuals, segments, groups and cultures.

Table 3 - *Food Preferences of Respondents*

| Menu items | Frequency | Percent (%) | Rank |
|--|-----------|-------------|------|
| <i>Banku</i> with okro soup | 136 | 38.8 | 1 |
| <i>Banku</i> with grilled tilapia | 93 | 26.6 | 2 |
| <i>Fufu</i> with soup | 69 | 19.7 | 3 |
| French fries with grilled chicken | 13 | 3.7 | 4 |
| <i>Waakye</i> | 11 | 3.1 | 5 |
| Pizza | 8 | 2.3 | 6 |
| Red red | 6 | 1.7 | 7 |
| <i>Kenkey</i> and fried fish | 6 | 1.7 | 8 |
| Rice with fried chicken | 5 | 1.4 | 9 |
| <i>Ampesi</i> with <i>palava</i> sauce | 3 | 0.9 | 10 |
| Total | 350 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field work, 2016

Relationship between Customers' Socio-demographic Characteristics and Food Preferences

The relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and food preferences was examined. The socio-demographic characteristics looked at in the study include; age, sex, marital status, educational level, occupation, income, religion, and ethnicity. This was done using descriptive cross-tabulation and chi-square statistics. It must be noted that only the top five most preferred foods of customers were used for the analysis as indicated in Table 4. It was realised from Table 4 that educational level ($X^2 = 31.469$, $p = 0.04$), marital status ($X^2 = 46.430$, $p = 0.02$), ethnicity ($X^2 = 46.180$, $p = 0.03$), occupation ($X^2 = 60.084$, $p = 0.02$) and monthly income ($X^2 = 67.213$, $p = 0.05$) recorded p-values which were <0.05 . This, therefore, implies that socio-demographic characteristics which relate to the food preferences of respondents were educational level, marital status, ethnicity, occupation and monthly income.

The results from Table 4 indicate that there is a significant relationship between some socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their food preferences. With regards to the socio-demographic characteristics, it was evident from the results that educational level, marital status, ethnicity, occupation and monthly income had significant influences on food preferences of customers.

From Table 4 it is evident that *Banku* with okro soup, *Banku* with grilled tilapia and *Fufu* with soup were generally preferred by those aged 20 – 49. The majority of those who preferred French fries with grilled chicken (76.9%) and *waakye* (54.5%) were those in their 20s. Since the other variables recorded

p-values which were greater than 0.05, the implications are that no significant relationship exists between food choices of the customers and their age ($X^2 = 63.284$, $p = 0.09$), sex ($X^2 = 4.986$, $p = 0.09$), and religion ($X^2 = 6.562$, $p = 0.76$).

The results indicate that more males than females had a preference for *Banku* with okro soup (58%), *Banku* with grilled tilapia (63.4%), *Fufu* with soup (58%) and French fries with grilled chicken (69.2%). More females than males, on the other hand, preferred *Waakye*. The findings of the present study showed no significant relationship was found between sex and food preferences ($X^2 = 4.986$, $p = 0.892$), however, the findings contradicts the study by Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013). The authors in their study argued that sex is an important physiological state that relates to preferences of people who patronise food service establishments in Ghana (Amuquandoh&Asafo-Adjei, 2013). The variations in the results between the present study and that of Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) might, however, have been due to the fact that the two studies used different methodological approaches in collecting data from their respondents. The study populations of the two studies also varied slightly. Thus, while the present study collected data mainly from indigenes, Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei mainly focused on international tourists.

Concerning marital status, *Banku* with okro soup and *Fufu* with soup were mostly preferred by 51.1 percent and 59.4 percent of respondents who were married. Unmarried customers also mostly had a preference for *Banku* with grilled tilapia, French fries with grilled chicken and *Waakye* with 81.8 percent, 60.2 percent, and 76.9 percent respectively.

Findings of the present study where a significant relationship was found between marital status and food preferences ($X^2 = 46.430$, $p = 0.028$) are consistent with previous studies which have indicated that marital status is a relevant element of food preferences of customers of food service establishments (Can, Günlü, & Can, 2015; Melkis, Hilmi, & Mustapha, 2014; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012). But this finding contradicts the study of Amuquondoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) which found out that marital status has no significant relationship with individual food preferences.

Regarding ethnicity, the majority of respondents who had a preference for *Banku* with okro soup, and *Banku* with grilled tilapia were Ewes with 58 percent and 52.7 percent. Whiles majority of Akans preferred *Fufu* with 39.1 percent followed by *waakye* 36.4 percent, *Banku* with grilled tilapia, *Banku* with okro soup and French fries with grilled chicken, 29.0 percent, 20.6 percent, and 15.4 percent in that order respectively.

The significant relationship found between occupation and food preference in the present study ($X^2 = 46.430$, $p = 0.028$) also confirms previous findings which have argued that occupation is an important variable of customers' food preferences at food service establishments (Dindyal&Dindyal, 2003; Li & Houston, 2001; Rose et al., 1995).

The present study's finding shows a significant relationship between income and food preferences ($X^2 = 67.213$, $p = 0.05$) is also consistent with other studies (European Food Information Council, 2004; Harvey, 2012). The implication of this significant relationship found between income and food preference may be that low-income earners find it difficult to patronise foods that are balanced and healthy from the food service establishments. Such

customers may only be interested in patronising foods that will merely give them satisfaction, as found by Dibsall, Lambert, Bobbin and Frewer (2003) in a previous study.

This study hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences. The results revealed significant relationships between socio-demographic characteristics (educational level, marital status, ethnicity, occupation, and monthly income) and food preferences. However, there was no significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, and religion) and food preferences. The null hypothesis (H₀) can neither be rejected nor accepted as some of the socio-demographic characteristics were significant while others were not.

Table 4 - Relationship between Customers' Socio-demographic Characteristics and Food Preferences

| Socio-demographics of respondents | Percentages of respondents preferring food | | | | | X2 (p-value) |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---------------|-----------------|
| | (%) Banku with okro soup | (%) Banku with grilled tilapia | (%) Fufu with soup | (%) French fries with grilled chicken | (%) Waakye | |
| Age | | | | | | 63.281 |
| <20 years | 3.8 | 6.5 | 4.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | (0.09) |
| 20 – 29 | 32.8 | 47.3 | 24.6 | 76.9 | 54.5 | |
| 30 -39 | 28.2 | 25.8 | 31.9 | 15.4 | 36.4 | |
| 40 – 49 | 28.3 | 18.3 | 29.0 | 7.7 | 9.1 | |
| 50 – 59 | 6.1 | 1.1 | 7.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | |
| 60+ | 0.8 | 1.1 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | |
| Sex | | | | | | 4.986 |
| Male | 58.0 | 63.4 | 58.0 | 69.2 | 45.5 | (0.89) |
| Female | 42.0 | 36.6 | 42.0 | 30.8 | 54.5 | |
| Educational level | | | | | | 31.469 |
| Primary | 3.1 | 5.4 | 1.4 | 6.3 | 9.1 | (0.04)* |
| Secondary/Technical | 15.3 | 22.6 | 10.1 | 20.1 | 32.5 | |
| Tertiary | 81.7 | 72.0 | 88.4 | 73.6 | 58.4 | |
| Religion | | | | | | 6.562 |
| Christian | 81.7 | 80.6 | 85.5 | 92.3 | 80.9 | (0.76) |
| Muslims | 18.3 | 19.4 | 14.5 | 7.7 | 19.1 | |
| Marital status | | | | | | 46.430 |
| Never married | 42.7 | 60.2 | 37.7 | 76.9 | 81.8 | (0.02)* |
| Married | 51.1 | 36.6 | 59.4 | 23.1 | 9.1 | |
| Separated/ widowed | 6.1 | 3.3 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 9.1 | |

Table 4, continued

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Ethnicity | | | | | | 46.180 |
| Ga/Dangme | 16.8 | 17.2 | 11.6 | 23.1 | 18.2 | (0.03)* |
| Akan | 20.6 | 29.0 | 39.1 | 15.4 | 36.4 | |
| Ewe | 58.0 | 52.7 | 44.9 | 61.5 | 45.5 | |
| Others | 4.6 | 1.1 | 4.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | |
| Occupation | | | | | | 60.084 |
| Student | 19.1 | 28.0 | 13.0 | 30.8 | 27.3 | (0.02)* |
| Managers | 51.1 | 38.7 | 42.0 | 38.5 | 63.6 | |
| Services(Clerical) | 10.7 | 11.8 | 20.3 | 15.4 | 0.0 | |
| Sales | 18.3 | 12.9 | 14.5 | 15.4 | 9.1 | |
| Self-employed | 0.8 | 8.6 | 10.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | |
| Monthly income | | | | | | 67.213 |
| <500 | 27.5 | 35.5 | 14.5 | 30.8 | 36.4 | (0.05)* |
| 500–1499 | 26.0 | 20.4 | 33.3 | 15.4 | 36.4 | |
| 1500 – 2499 | 23.7 | 20.4 | 36.2 | 23.1 | 18.2 | |
| 2500 – 3499 | 9.9 | 8.6 | 10.1 | 15.4 | 9.1 | |
| 3500 – 4499 | 6.9 | 9.7 | 2.9 | 7.7 | 0.0 | |
| 4500+ | 6.1 | 5.4 | 2.9 | 7.7 | 0.0 | |

Source: Field work, 2016

Relationship between Food Characteristics and Customers' Food Preferences

The relationship between food characteristics and food preferences of customers' was examined. The food characteristics variables looked at in this study were taste, price, presentation, texture, flavour, and health. This was achieved by using chi-square statistics. From Table 5, it was realised that taste had a chi-square value of 20.647 and a significance level of 0.02. This significance level is <0.05 . The implication, therefore, is that taste was significantly related to the food preferences.

It was, however, realised that price ($X^2 = 17.954$, $p = 0.06$), presentation ($X^2 = 14.497$, $p = 0.15$), texture ($X^2 = 7.590$, $p = 0.67$), flavour ($X^2 = 10.179$, $p = 0.43$) as well as healthiness of the foods ($X^2 = 4.463$, $p = 0.92$) recorded p-values which were >0.05 . The implication, therefore, is that no statistically significant relationships were found between food preferences and price, presentation, texture, flavour, as well as healthiness of the foods.

The majority of the respondents were also in agreement with the statement that price, presentation, texture, flavour, and health had informed the food preferences of the respondents. Contrary to the general findings made, about 54 percent of the respondents disagreed that price had a role to play in their preference for French fries with grilled chicken and sauce.

From Table 5 with the price, presentation, texture, and health against *Fufu* with soup more than half of the respondents 88.4, 81.2, 88.4, 84.1 percent respectively agreed that price has a relationship with their food preferences, followed by *Banku* with okro soup 68.7, 77.1, 84.0, 80.9 percent

in that order and followed closely by *banku* with grilled tilapia 67.7, 73.1, 86.0, 80.6 percent in that order.

In addition to the statistical significance observed for the relationship between taste and food preference, it was realised that taste descriptively relates to preference for; *Banku* with okro soup (94.7%), *Banku* with grilled tilapia (82.8%), *Fufu* with soup (95.7%), French fries with grilled chicken (100%), and *Waakye* (81.8%).

It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between customers' food characteristics and their food preferences. However, the results of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between taste and food preference of the respondent. On the other hand there was no significant relationship between food characteristics (price, presentation, flavour, health and texture) and food preferences. The null hypothesis (H_0) can neither be rejected nor accepted as there was a significant relationship between only taste and food preferences. The other food characteristics did not have a significant relationship with food preferences.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that other food characteristics (price, presentation, texture, flavour, and health) had no significant relationship with food preferences. The current study contradicts the findings of Davis et al. (2012), who found out that men and women for fear of eating late after work for health implications, resort to eating after the close of work from food service establishments to avoid cooking and late eating.

Again the findings of the current study on price not being statistically significant are in contrary to the findings of Popkin et al. (2005) who found the price to have a relationship with individuals' food preferences.

Concurrently, in a study conducted by Shannon et al., (2002), it was found out that price is second to taste which relates to food choice as well as preference.

This finding may be as a result of the limitations of the study design which included only food service establishments specifically standalone restaurants. Other food service establishments such as local chop bars and hotels with restaurants may have produced a different result. The finding from this study in relation to the price of the foods is in contrast to other studies which reported price to as a major food characteristic that drives people's preference for a specific food (Gregoire, 2013; Mensah, 2009; Popkin, Duffey, & Gordon-Larsen, 2005). Again, contrary to this finding, Namkung and Jang (2007) reported that presentation of food is a major factor in people's satisfaction and preference for a specific food in restaurants.

Consistent with previous studies is the present study's finding that food taste is significantly related to food preference (Josiam & Monteiro, 2004; Tunisi, 2000). Thus, individuals make their preferences for a specific food based on the taste of the food. The results of a study by Sukalakamala and Boyce (2007) indicated that consumers at Thai restaurants considered unique tastes and authentic ingredients as the most important components of their authentic dining experience.

Evidence from different countries of the world revealed that fresh taste, natural and home-cooked taste that customers derive from the consumption of a specific food are mainly the driving forces for the demands and preferences for such foods, and not just the reputation of specific food establishments (Abdullah et al., 2011). There is also a documented evidence from China, the world's most populous countries in support of the assertion

that taste plays a major role in people's preferences for food (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Josiam and Monteiro (2004) noted that taste is the most important element of food attributes and often drives customers' preferences in relation to a given food. With the vastly documented evidence of taste being a major factor in customer's preference for a given food, it is important that managers of food establishments work towards serving tasty foods to their customers.

Similarly, Gummesson et al. (1996), Ross (1995) and Turner et al. (1995) found that personal preferences for taste had a much greater stimulus on the food service establishment. In similar studies, Berge et al., (2000) argued that taste and distaste are more important for younger consumers while Roininen et al. (1999) concluded that elderly people are more concerned about nutrition and health.

Taste is typically found to be the most or amongst the most, important element of food choice (Lee et al., 2006). Taste is enhanced with ingredients that are consumed by customers (Robinson, Borzekowski, Matheson, & Kraemer, 2007). Customers may even have expectations that unhealthy food (i.e. food high in fat, sweeteners and salt) tastes better. Raghunathan et al. (2006) revealed that customers' experienced taste pleasantness of food is higher for food portrayed as unhealthy, compared to the same food which is not portrayed as unhealthy.

Table 5 - Relationship between Customers' Food Characteristics and Food Preferences

| Food characteristics | | | Percentages of Respondents Preferring Food | | | | | X ² (p-value) |
|----------------------|----------|---------|--|--|------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | (%) <i>Banku</i> with okro soup | (%) <i>Banku</i> with grilled tilapia | (%) <i>Fufu</i> with soup | (%) French Fries with grilled chicken | (%) <i>Waakye</i> | |
| | | N = 350 | | | | | | |
| Taste | Agree | 273 | 94.7 | 82.8 | 95.7 | 100 | 81.8 | 20.647 (0.02)* |
| | Disagree | 77 | 5.3 | 12.2 | 4.3 | 0 | 18.2 | |
| Price | Agree | 250 | 68.7 | 67.7 | 88.4 | 46.2 | 63.6 | 17.951 (0.06) |
| | Disagree | 100 | 31.3 | 32.3 | 11.6 | 53.8 | 36.4 | |
| Presentation | Agree | 264 | 77.1 | 73.1 | 81.2 | 61.5 | 81.8 | 14.497 (0.15) |
| | Disagree | 86 | 22.9 | 26.9 | 18.8 | 38.5 | 18.2 | |
| Texture | Agree | 297 | 84.0 | 86.0 | 88.4 | 92.3 | 63.6 | 7.590 (0.67) |
| | Disagree | 53 | 16.0 | 14.0 | 11.6 | 7.7 | 36.4 | |
| Flavour | Agree | 281 | 82.4 | 81.7 | 79.7 | 69.2 | 81.8 | 10.179 (0.43) |
| | Disagree | 69 | 17.6 | 18.3 | 20.3 | 30.8 | 18.2 | |
| Health | Agree | 289 | 80.9 | 80.6 | 84.1 | 84.6 | 90.9 | 4.463 (0.92) |
| | Disagree | 61 | 19.1 | 19.4 | 15.9 | 15.4 | 9.1 | |

Source: Field work 2016

Contrary to the findings of the present study, price was found to be significantly related to food preferences in previous studies (Gregoire, 2013; Namasivayam, 2004). Namasivayam, for instance, observed that the fairness of the price has been identified as one psychological element that relates consumers' reaction and decision to purchase.

With regard to the conceptual framework, this study demonstrated that the socio-demographic characteristics (marital status, educational level, occupation, income, and ethnicity) and food characteristic (taste) inform individual's preference for a specific food at the restaurant, which corroborates postulations of Randall and Sanjur (1981) and Chang et al. (2010). The authors argued that food preferences are predisposed by the individual and the food characteristics. The individual characteristics according to Randall and Sanjur (1981) include age, sex, education, income, nutrition and knowledge.

Customers' Perception of Characteristics of Food Offered by the Food Service Establishments

Table 6 presents customers' perception of the characteristics of foods offered by the food service establishments. The healthiness of the food was the highest ranked with a mean of 3.88 and standard deviation of 0.888. Customers generally perceived the presentation of the foods as attractive (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.912). Namkung and Jang (2007) in this regard, noted that presentation is a significant contributor to customers' preferences. The theory assumes that consumers choose products whose attributes reflect their goals/expectations which in the present study implies that the presentation of

the foods appealed to respondents as one of their expectations from the types of food they prefer.

Table 6 -*Customers' Perception of Characteristics of Foods Offered by the Food Service Establishments(N = 350)*

| Characteristics of foods | % in agreement | Mean | Standard deviation |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------|--------------------|
| The food is healthy | 70.6 | 3.88 | 0.888 |
| The food is attractively presented | 69.1 | 3.84 | 0.912 |
| Food tastes nice | 67.5 | 3.84 | 0.911 |
| Food flavour blends well | 62.2 | 3.79 | 0.886 |
| Food texture is appropriate | 62.1 | 3.78 | 0.889 |
| The food is not expensive | 56.0 | 3.54 | 1.023 |

Source: Fieldwork 2016 Scale (1.0 -1.49 strongly disagree, 1.5-2.49 disagree, 2.5- 3.49 neutral, 3.5- 4.49 agree, 4.5- 5.0 strongly agree)

The respondents also generally described the foods as tasty, (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.911). Also, with a mean of 3.79 and standard deviation of 0.886, the respondents generally perceived the flavour of the foods as well-blended. It was also found out that the respondents generally considered the texture of the foods as appropriate (mean = 3.78, SD = 0.889). This finding is consistent with Rosalin and Soetanto's (2006) argument that customers' food preferences involve three main areas of concerns which include the food, individual and environmental characteristics. This implies that preference for a particular food may vary due to the texture of the food and the expectations of the clients

regarding the texture of such foods as opined by Ngapo, Dransfield and Martin, (2007) and Nielsen, Bech-Larsen and Grunert (1998).

In relation to the price of foods served, customers were of the view that it was not expensive even though price had the lowest ranking among the six variables representing food characteristics the rest which are taste, texture, flavour, presentation and health. The results point to the role of price in customers' perception of foods they patronise at food service establishments.

Summary

The findings of the study revealed that the food mostly preferred by the customers was *Banku* with okro soup and the least preferred one was *Ampesi*. Also, there was a statistically significant relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics (marital status, ethnicity, educational level, occupation, and income) and food preference. Furthermore, there was no significant relationship between customers' age, sex, and religion. The study also revealed that taste was significantly associated with the food preferences of the respondents. However, the other food-related variables; price, presentation, texture, flavour, and healthiness of the foods had no statistically significant relationship with food preferences. In relation to food characteristics, it was shown that majority of the customers agreed that the food purchased was tasty, moderately price, well presented, had a good texture and flavour and was healthy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The summary is based on key findings, while conclusions were drawn based on the findings. Recommendations are also made in relation to customers' food preferences at Ho and Ghana at large. Suggestions are also made for further research into customers' food preferences.

Summary

The study sought to assess the food preferences of customers' of food service establishments in Ho. The specific objectives were to:

- i) Identify the foods preferred by customers
- ii) Analyze customers' perception of characteristics of foods offered by the Food Service Establishments
- iii) Examine the relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences
- iv) Examine the relationship between food characteristics and customers' food preferences.

The conceptual framework guiding the study was the model of food preferences by Randall and Sanjur (1981). This model explains how socio-demographic and food characteristics have a relationship with food

preferences but the research has revealed that not all the characteristics have a relationship with customers' food preferences.

The study used a descriptive research design which was based on the positivist perspective. A sample of 384 customers was selected using the systematic sampling technique by which every 3rd person was selected. In all, 350 questionnaires were used for the analysis, at a response rate of 91 percent.

The quantitative data gathered was edited, coded and analysed using SPSS software (version 21). Frequency was used to identify the preferred food of customers by their percentages. A chi-square test was used to analyze the relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and food characteristics and their food preferences.

Summary of Key Findings

The most preferred food among customers was *Banku* with Okro soup (38.8%), followed by *Banku* with grilled tilapia (26.6%), *Fufu* with soup (19.7%), French fries with grilled chicken (3.7%), and *Waakye* (3.1%) respectively. *Banku* with grilled tilapia and *Fufu* with soup were generally preferred by those aged 20 – 49. The majority of those who preferred French fries with grilled chicken (76.9%) and *waakye* (54.5%) were those in their 20s.

The study further showed that more males than females had a preference for *Banku* with okro soup (58%), *Banku* with grilled tilapia (63.4%), *Fufu* with soup (58%) and French fries with grilled chicken (69.2%).

More females than males, on the other hand, preferred *Waakye* with sauce and fish. *Banku* with okro soup (38.8%) and *Fufu* with soup (59.4%)

were mostly preferred by respondents who were married while unmarried customers mostly had a preference for *Banku* with grilled tilapia (60.2%), French fries with grilled chicken (76.9%) and *Waakye* (81.8%). Regarding ethnicity, the majority of respondents who had a preference for *Banku* with okro soup (58%), *Banku* with grilled tilapia (52.7%) were Ewes.

Also, a significant relationship existed between customers' socio-demographic characteristics and their food preferences. The socio-demographic characteristics that were significantly related to food preferences were educational level, marital status, ethnicity, occupation and monthly income.

However, the taste was the only food characteristic that was significantly related to food preferences. No statistically significant relationships were, however, found between food preference and price, presentation, texture, flavour as well as healthiness of the foods.

Finally, with customers' perception of characteristics of food (taste, price, presentation, texture, flavour, and healthiness of the food) offered by the food service establishments, majority of the customers were in agreed that the food purchased portrayed the characteristics above.

Conclusions

The most preferred food of customers of food service establishments in Ho was *Banku* with okro soup which implies that people would purchase the staple food of their region; the study was conducted on Volta region. Because Ho is a town inhabited mostly by Ewes, *Banku* which is the staple food of the

Ewes was found as the most preferred food. The findings reflect the ideology that Ghanaians, generally appreciate their local foods, especially the foods of the ethnic groups they come from. Other highly preferred foods among the customers were *Banku* with grilled tilapia and *Fufu* with soup.

Also, more males generally prefer *Banku* with okro soup and *Banku* with grilled tilapia, more than females. On the other hand, more females prefer *Waakye* than their male counterparts which shows different preferences for food by individuals in the area of sex. Furthermore, taste of food has a relationship with customers' food preferences.

Socio-demographic characteristics such as educational level, marital status, ethnicity, occupation, monthly income, and taste were found to have significant relationships with customers' food preferences. Thus the food preferences of people differ on the basis of their educational levels, marital status, ethnicity, occupation, and monthly income.

With relation to the framework guiding the study, it can be concluded that social-demographic characteristics has an influence on food purchased and consumed. There was a relationship between customers' socio-demographic characteristics (marital status, educational level, ethnicity, occupation and monthly income) and food characteristics. Socio-demographic characteristics had minimal influence on food characteristic to affect food preference. Only taste had a significant relationship. It could be concluded that socio-demographic characteristics and food characteristics influenced food preferences.

Recommendations

Since food satisfies a basic need and is essential to the body, it is important for food service establishments to meet these needs by providing foods that customers prefer. Managers of these establishments need to be sensitive to the factors that shape customers' preferences by constantly seeking feedback from customers.

Considering the fact that taste emerged as having a significant relationship with customers' food preference, it is imperative for operators of food service establishments to prioritise taste in preparation of their meals. This has the tendency to draw more customers and thereby increase the market base for food service establishments.

The foods consumed were described as healthy and it is recommended that the operators of the establishments should maintain this standard as customers are becoming more health conscious. GTA and industry players should organize refresher seminars/ conferences for operators and owners to provide them with information pertaining to the trends and changes that are happening in the industry as far as customers' preferences for food are concerned.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The study was predominantly on food preferences of customers of food service establishments in Ho. A further study could be done on food preferences of customers who patronise hotel restaurants. Research can also be conducted on customers' food preferences in other regions in the country.

Further studies may also be conducted using a qualitative approach to unearth the reasons for customers' food preferences.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

Food Preferences of Customers of Food Service Establishments in Ho.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/Madam

I am an MPhil student in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Cape Coast. I am conducting a study on “**Food preferences of customers of food service establishments in Ho in the Volta Region of Ghana**”. This is purely an academic exercise. Your participation in this study is of paramount importance. You are assured that the information you give will be kept confidential and used only for this study. Your anonymity is also guaranteed.

Thank you.

Date:

Section A: Food characteristics

On a scale of 5- point Likert scale 1-5 (strongly disagree - strongly agree).

SD= strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral, A = agree and SA = strongly agree. Kindly indicate your response by ticking (√) the appropriate box.

| Variables | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, it tastes nice | | | | | |
| 2. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, it is not expensive | | | | | |
| 3. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, it is attractively presented | | | | | |
| 4. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, the texture is usually appropriate | | | | | |
| 5. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, the flavour blends well | | | | | |
| 6. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, it is healthy | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| 7. With regards to the food that I normally purchase in this restaurant, it is nutritious | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|

Section B: Dishes / Meals served in the food service establishments

On a scale of 4 – point Likert scale 1-4 ranging from (not preferred – most preferred) indicate the extent to which you prefer the following dishes by ticking (√)the appropriate box. NP = not preferred, LP = least preferred, N = neutral, P = preferred and MP = most preferred.

| Continental dishes | NP | LP | N | P | MP |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 8.French fries (chips) | | | | | |
| 9.Pizza | | | | | |
| 10.Fried rice | | | | | |
| 11.Vegetable rice | | | | | |
| 12.Pasta | | | | | |
| 13.Salads | | | | | |
| 14.Other (specify) | | | | | |
| Local | | | | | |
| 15.Jollof rice | | | | | |
| 16.Fufu | | | | | |
| 17.Waakye | | | | | |
| 18.Banku | | | | | |
| 19.Red red | | | | | |
| 20.Ampesi | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 21. Ga Kenkey | | | | | |
| 22. Riceballs (Omotuo) | | | | | |
| 23. Tuo Zaafi | | | | | |
| 24. Kokonte | | | | | |
| 25. Eworkple | | | | | |
| 26. Other (specify) | | | | | |
| Accompaniments (Soups/stew) | | | | | |
| 27. Fante fante | | | | | |
| 28. Grilled chicken | | | | | |
| 29. Fried chicken | | | | | |
| 30. Grilled tilapia | | | | | |
| 31. Okro soup/stew | | | | | |
| 32. Garden eggs stew | | | | | |
| 33. Groundnut soup | | | | | |
| 34. Ademee detsi (green-green soup) | | | | | |
| 35. Palmnut soup | | | | | |
| 36. Tomato sauce | | | | | |
| 37. Light soup (meat) | | | | | |
| 38. Light soup (fish) | | | | | |
| 39. Other (specify) | | | | | |

40. What is your most preferred food.....?

41. What is your reason for preferring that particular food?

- a) Price []
- b) Presentation []
- c) Distance []
- d) Health []
- e) Taste []
- f) Texture []
- g) Ethnicity []

Section D: Background information

42. What is your age in years?

- a) Less than 20 years []
- b) 21-29 years []
- c) 30-39 years []
- d) 40-49 []
- e) 50-59 years []
- f) 60 or more []

43. What is your sex?

- a) Male []
- b) Female []

44. What is your educational level?

- i). Primary []
- ii).Secondary/technical []
- iii).Training college []
- iv) Polytechnic/University graduate []
- v). Postgraduate []
- vi).Other (specify).....

45. What is your religion?

- a) Christian []
- b) Moslem []
- c) Other (specify).....

46. What is your marital status?

- a) Single []
- b) Married []
- c) Separated []
- d) Widowed []

47. What is your ethnicity?

- a) Ga []
- b) Akan []
- c) Ewe []
- d) Other (specify).....

48. What is your monthly income?

- i) Less than GH 500 []
- ii) GH 500-GH 1,499 []
- iii) GH 1,500- GH 2,499 []
- iv) GH 2,500- GH 3,499 []
- v) GH 3,500- GH 4,499 []
- vi) GH 4,500 and above []

49. Please mention your occupation

Thank you

APPENDIX B

Plate 1: Layout of the selected Food Service Establishments



Plate 2: Layout of the selected Food Service Establishments



Plate 3: Layout of the selected food service establishments continued



Plate 4: Layout of the selected food service establishments continued



APPENDIX C

FOODS PREFERRED BY RESPONDENTS



Plate 5: WAAKYE



Plate 6: RED RED

Foods Preferred By Respondents Continued



Plate 7: Banku with Grilled Tilapia



Plate 8: Banku with Okro Soup