

Food Service Experience and Customer Behaviour in Fast-Food Establishments in Port Harcourt

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Abstract

Understanding guest behaviour and attitude towards a particular brand is very crucial for the sustenance of any business especially those in the service sector such as Food and Beverage and businesses. Every customer wants to enjoy value for his money and with memorable dining experience. The purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between Food Service Experience and Customers' Behaviour of selected Fast-Foods in Port Harcourt. To establish this, the study formulated four research questions, objectives and hypotheses. The study is a quantitative study which adopted the survey method. The population of the study consisted of Guests of all the hotels operating in Port Harcourt. A total of 10 hotels were selected for the study from which a sample size of 323 using Freund and William formula for an infinite sample size was determined. The study adopted the use of questionnaire for the collection of data and Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient was used in the testing of hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed a positive Correlation between the dimensions of food service experience (Service quality and Servicescape) the measures of Customer behaviour (Customers Loyalty and Revisit Intention). These implied that significant relationships exist between the Independent Variables (Food Service Experience and the Dependent Variables (Customers' Behaviour). As such, the study concluded that the quality-of-service delivery was a vital determinant and influencer of customer decision of where to dine. The study recommended that managers should evaluate their service delivery processes and also have feedback mechanisms in place so as to improve their services and enhance guest experience.

Keywords: Fast Service Experience, Customer Behaviour, Attitude, Fast-Food, Brand Name, Servicescape.

Introduction

Tourism and Hospitality Industry could be considered one of the largest and fastest growing Industry in the world. The industry could form very important part of the Service Sector which could influence the economy globally, (Ninemeier and Perdue, 2008; Kay, 2003; Koc, 2004). Fast-Food sectors could maintain or possibly improve their current status, by their dependent on customers' "Behaviours". According to Ryuand, (2011) customers' behaviour might reflect on their dining experience. The author has stated that the Quality of Food Service Delivery could be important aspect in destination dining selections. The factors which could influence dining experience might include: Culture, environment, price, taste and previous experiences, (Liu and Jang, 2009). According to Ryu, Han, and Jang, (2010), Food Service/Dining Experience could form integral part of Consumer Behaviour; which have been widely researched and applied in Hospitality Marketing Strategies. The need to eat healthy, quality and affordable foods could influenced people seeking new restaurants and visiting new places. This might therefore be an important issue for Hospitality Industry such as the Fast-Food Establishments to explore and understand the importance of dining experience and be motivated in

the area of product development and marketing strategies. This process would enhance Service Delivery approaches and create competitive advantage. Consumer behaviour therefore, could play important role in Hospitality settings which would influence the Industry and the Economy which might deserve investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Understanding of the factors that influence Food Service Experience and Consumer Behaviour could help Fast Food Establishment to design models that could influence favourable brand choice, (March and Woodside, 2005). Conversely, ignoring customer confusion could multiply the confusion which might be detrimental to Sales Revenue, Profit and Customer Retention in the Fast-Food Establishments. Given the array of brands of Fast-Food Establishments and selection difficulties posed by Consumers, this Study will find out the relationship between Food Service Experience and Consumer Behaviour in Fast-Food Establishments in Port Harcourt.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

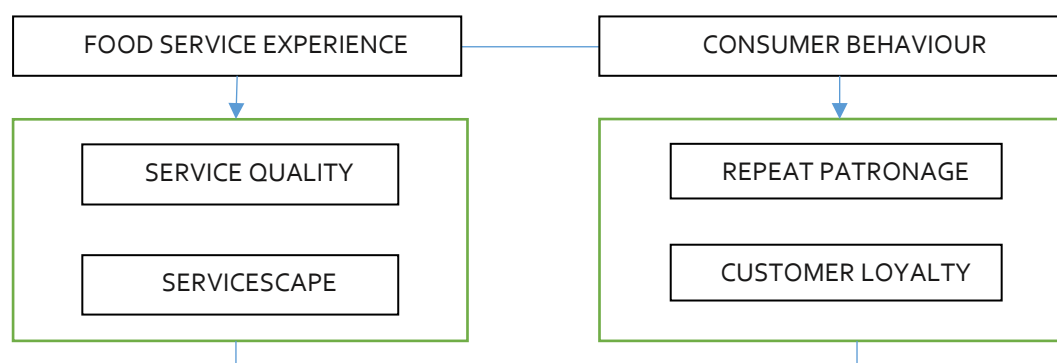


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this Study is to find out the relationship between Food Service Experience and Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt. The objectives are:

- i. To ascertain the relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage.
- ii. To evaluate the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty.
- iii. To determine the relationship between Servicescape and Repeat Patronage.

Research Questions

- i. How does Service Quality affect Repeat Patronage of Consumer Behaviour in Fast-Food Establishments in Port Harcourt?
- ii. What is the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty of Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt?
- iii. How does Servicescape influence Repeat Patronage of Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt?
- iv. What is the relationship between Servicescape and Customer Loyalty in Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage of Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt.
- ii. There is no relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty of Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt.
- iii. There is no relationship between Servicescape and Repeat Patronage of Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt.
- iv. There is no relationship between Service cape and Customer Loyalty of Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt.

Review of Empirical Evidence

Service quality and Customer Loyalty

Casual relationships among service quality dimensions and loyalty in Chinese chain restaurants have been investigated, Chang, (2010). The mediating effect of customer satisfaction and the moderating effect of customer-perceived service guaranteed the strength on customer post-purchasing behaviours. They found that customer loyalty could be achieved if a customer is satisfied and the satisfaction was derived when the service delivery expected were met. Thuy, (2011) conducted a study to test the relationship between service convenience and customer satisfaction based on the direct and indirect paths via perceived service quality for airlines customers in Vietnam. This study also explored the relative importance of various dimensions of service quality. The findings of the study showed a positive relationship between service qualities dimensions such Empathy, assurance, and responsiveness with customer loyalty. Chen, and Hitt, (2002) attempted to investigate the categorization of home delivery quality elements derived from service convenience model and their impact on customer satisfaction of Turkish restaurants. The study cross examined 1200 correspondent across 51 restaurants in the country, the findings showed that customers are happy with the quality of convenience they enjoy of which the restaurants are responsible for and agreed that had further enhanced their loyalty potentials. In the recent studies with reference to Indian retail banking, researchers have examined impact of service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty and their findings have shown positive relationship between service quality and customer loyalty (Kaura and Datta, 2012; Kaura, 2013; Kaura, 2013).

Service Quality and Revisit Intention

Kumar (2012) found positive relationship between service qualities and repurchase intention and willingness to recommend. Kaura and Datta, (2012) and Lenka *et al.*, (2009) also found that service quality dimensions have positive impact on customer satisfaction and revisit intention in Indian banking sector. Kaura, (2012) conducted study on Indian banking sector and found that service quality dimensions have positive impact on customer satisfaction, hence revisit tendencies.

Bedi, (2010) carried out study to test for a relationship between overall customer service expectation, and customer behavior intention (propensity to recommend and switching intention). Higher overall service received was associated with higher propensity to recommend whereas lower with switching intention. A study conducted by Lenka *et al.*, (2009) and Kaura, (2013) on Indian banking sector showed that customers satisfied with banks service delivery are loyal and hence tend to choose the same service providers. 120 customers were sampled and variables were elicited with a five -point likert scale well-structured questionnaire. The study adopted Pearson's Product moment coefficient. According to Yieh *et al.*, (2007), effect of service quality on customer revisit intention asserted that

both empathy and employee–customer interaction have a positive influence on customer revisit intention via overall satisfaction.

Servicescape and Customer Loyalty

Tuzunkan and Albayrak, (2016) stated that the dimensions of the physical environment in restaurants consists of service personnel, facility aesthetics, layout, ambiance, table layout and lighting. Ryu and Han, (2010) used the DINESCAPE scale to determine the Servicescape dimensions of the environment in restaurants and its impact behavioural intention. They describe DINESCAPE as the Servicescape in the dining area of luxury restaurants that stimulate customer loyalty. Furthermore, they have determined the dimensions of Servicescape as facility aesthetics, ambiance, lighting, service product, layout and social factors. Mahalingam, Jain, & Sahay, (2016) established a DINESCAPE dimension scale as aesthetics, lighting, ambiance, layout, table settings and service staff. Ryu and Jang (2007) studied the effect of the dinner environment on the behavioural intentions of consumers in luxury restaurants as perceived through their emotions.

They determined the Servicescape dimensions of the service establishments in six dimensions as facility aesthetics, lighting, ambiance, layout, dining equipment and employees in their study. Gentile, Siller & Noci, (2007) used the concept of restaurant atmosphere instead of the expression of physical environment/Servicescape in their studies. They determined 4 dimensions as restaurant atmosphere dimensions, namely lighting & ambiance, facility aesthetics, general plan and dining equipment & furniture. Verheof, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsairo & Schlensinger, (2007) have identified restaurant aesthetics, ambiance, lighting, table settings, and layout and service staff in as the physical environmental dimensions of restaurants in their studies. Hoffman, Novak & Venkatesh, (2004) evaluated the position of physical environment in first class restaurant establishments in Istanbul with content analysis in terms of customer comments on TripAdvisor.

Servicescape and Revisit Intention

Ambience is an important part of the Servicescape, especially in those situations in which customers must spend several hours in the leisure service setting. Many consumers implicitly associate with the quality of Servicescape and how it can influence their choice to revisit. A study by Young, Clark & McIntyre, (2007), an exploratory comparison of the casual dining experience: Chain versus independent restaurants. The findings revealed that dimensions of service are the most important reason people patronize fast food in the Asian part of the world. A study by Douglas, (2015) on the impact of ambience condition on customer satisfaction in fast food industry in Bostwana revealed that there is a significant relationship between ambience condition and customer satisfaction hence they resolved to revisit.

Methodology

Research Design

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of guest of hotels operating in Port Harcourt and other environs sourced from the internet (Tripadvisor.com). The guest of these hotels formed the Table 1: Primary Respondents.

S/N	Names of Hotels	No. of Hotels Guest
1	Switch Spirit Hotel	32

2	Echeleon Heights Hotel	33
3	Grand Tokyo Hotel	32
4	Bayview Hotel	32
5	Lemeridian Hotel	33
6	Spadorb Hotel	32
7	Sanclin Hotel	32
8	Spring Hill Hotel	32
9	Novotel Hotel	32
10	Helena Haven Hotel	33
	TOTAL	323

SOURCE: Retrieved from Tripadvisor.com, 2021

Sampling Procedure/Sample Size Determination

To determine the exact sample size for the present study, the suggestion in Freund and William (1994) for determining infinite population was upheld. To determine the same size, the researcher adopted the Freund and William formula. The authors proposed the formula to determining the sample size (n) as follows:

$$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 PQ}{e^2}$$

Where:

P = Probability for positive response.

Q = Probability for negative response.

e = Tolerable error (0.05).

$Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ from the critical table Z of 0.05 under infinity $^{\infty}$.

$\alpha = 0.05$, the significant level

n = Sample size

Applying this formula to the present study, the sample size n is obtained as follows:

$$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 PQ}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.7)(0.3)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(3.8416)(0.7)(0.3)}{(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{0.806746}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 322.69 \approx 323$$

Data Collection Method

Data for this study were collected from Primary and Secondary Sources.

Validity of the Instrument

Reliability and Validity Instruments: Reliability ensures that items measured the construct, while the Validity confirmed how accurate the instrument measured. The most common reliability Coefficient was Cronbach's Alpha; estimated internal consistency based on average inter-item Correlation. A reliability of 0.07 or higher is considered acceptable in most social science researcher situations.

Table 2: Composite Reliability of Individual Variables

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Service Quality	4	0.762
Servicescape	4	0.783
Guest Loyalty	4	0.833
Revisit Intention	4	0.772

Source: Authors Computation, 2021

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse questionnaire distribution and respondents' demographics characteristics. Pearson's Correlation was used to decide the degree of linear relationship between any two of the image variables. It can be used to calculate between all summation scores to explore the simple bivariate relationships between variables. According to James Lani, (2013) if the Correlation Coefficient value is (+1), it shows that the relationship is positive and strong, and if it is (-1) the relationship is strong but inverse, therefore the Correlation Coefficient should not be more than (+1) and should not be less than (-1), while (0), indicates a weak -relationships, and is either positive or negative.

Table 3: Questionnaire Administration and Response Rate

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Copies Retrieved	310	95.9	95.9	95.9
	Copies Unrecovered	13	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	323	100	100	

Source: Survey Data (2021)

From the Table 3 above, a total of 323 copies of questionnaire were administered, out of which 310 copies were dully completed and returned, which makes up 95.9% of the total questionnaire administered. 13 copies of the questionnaire were not returned which represent 4.1%. This implies that 310 copies of the returned questionnaire were used for the data analysis.

TABLE 4: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
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Gender	Male	121	39.0
	Female	189	61.0
Age	From 20-29	82	26.5
	From 30-39	102	32.9
	From 40-49	78	25.2
	More Than 50 years	48	15.5
Educational Qualification	O'Level	101	32.6
	OND	77	24.8
	HND/ B.Sc	79	25.5
	PGD/ M.Sc	47	9.7
	Ph. D	6	1.9
Marital Status	Single	108	34.8
	Married	172	55.5
	Other	30	9.7

Source: Researchers' Computation (2021)

From Table 4 above, gender distribution of the respondents indicates That 61.0% of the respondents are females, and 39.0% are males. This implied that majority of the participants in this study are females, followed by the males.

Marital Status Distribution of Respondents

From Table 4 above, in terms of marital status, 34.8% of the respondents are single, 55.5% are married, and 9.7% are other. This implied that majority of the participants in this study are single, followed by the married and other.

Age Group Distribution of Respondents

From Table 4 above, the age distribution of respondents was divided into four groups, and the lowest age groups were those between the ages 20 to 29 years which comprised of 26.5% of the sampled population. The analysis further shows that about 32.9% of the respondents were within the age of 30 to 39, while those within the age 40 to 49 were about 25.2% and 15. 5% were above 50years of

age. This shows that majority of participants used for the current study have their age range within 36 to 41 years, followed by those with age bracket 30 to 35. Those above 50years old are the least percentage of the total sampled population.

Respondent's Distribution by Education Qualification

From Table 4 above, the analysis of participant's distribution by education qualification shows that about 32.6% have O' Level, 24.8%, OND, 25.5, HND/B.SC, 15.2, PGD/M.SC 9.7%, and. Ph. D 1.9%. This implies that majority of participants used in this study were holders of o'level qualifications holders (32.6%), followed by those with HND and B. SC certificate (25.5%).

Test of Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage.

Table 5: Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis One

Correlations			
		Service Quality	Repeat Patronage
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.279 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	323	323
Repeat Patronage	Pearson Correlation	.279 ^{**}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	323	323
^{**} . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Field Survey Data 2021; SPSS 21 Output			

From the result on Table 5 above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.279 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Table 6: Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis Two

Correlations			
		Service Quality	Customer Loyalty
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.293 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	323	323
Customer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.293 ^{**}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

	N	323	323
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
Source: Field Survey Data 2021; SPSS 21 Output			

From the result on Table 6 above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.293 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between Servicescape and Repeat Patronage.

Table 7: Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis Three.

Correlations			
		Servicescape	Repeat Patronage
Servicescape	Pearson Correlation	1	.301**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	323	323
Repeat Patronage	Pearson Correlation	.301**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	323	323
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
Source: Field Survey Data 2021; SPSS21 Output			

From the result on Table 7 above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.301 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Servicescape and Repeat Patronage.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between Servicescape and Customer Loyalty

Table 8: Statistical Analysis for Hypothesis Four

From the result on Table 8 above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.272 while P. value (2-tailed) is

Correlations			
		Servicescape	Customer Loyalty
Servicescape	Pearson Correlation	1	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	323	323
Customer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.272**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	323	323
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
Source: Field Survey Data 2021; SPSS21 Output			

0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the

alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Servicescape and Customer Loyalty.

Discussion of Findings

The First Hypothesis (H_{01}) stated that there is no significant relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage. This was tested at 5% significance level using Pearson correlation. The result from our analysis showed a p-value of 0.000 while the alpha value was 0.05, therefore. Following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Which means that there is a significant relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage. The analysis also showed Pearson Correlation of 0.279 and Co-efficient of Determination of 84% which implies that there is a strong positive relationship between Service Quality and Repeat Patronage. These finding is in line with the study of Ciana (2010). The scholar posited that Service Quality improves one's desire to Revisit a place for a pleasant stay experience which summed up to be quality of hotel service delivery. The scholar posited that this dimension of Food Service Experience Delivery is a vital influencer in customer preference of a Facility. Respondents also unanimously agreed that the Quality of Services ranging as in: empathy, responsiveness, tangibility, assurance and also in-Service Quality which could influence their choice of hotels. The forgone could be traced to the works of Bitner and Zeithmal, (2003). The scholars affirmed that a good hotel with the required skill set of quality service delivery from marketing point of view could strategically positioned in retaining existing customers as well as also attracting prospective customers and might as well encourage repurchase intentions.

The Second Hypothesis (H_{02}) stated that there is no significant relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty. This was tested at 5% significance level using Pearson Correlation. The result from our analysis showed a p-value of 0.000 while the alpha value was 0.05. Therefore, following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This means that there is a significant relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty. The analysis also showed Correlation Co-efficient of 0.293 and Co-efficient of Determination of 87%. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty. This finding is in tandem with the findings from the works of (Croning et al, 2000). The scholars argued that Quality Service Delivery of any kind especially as it concerns Food and Beverage should be a priority for a Quality Service Delivery Establishment. The scholars citing previous researches done in Commercial Banks and asserted that Quality Service could be a yardstick in measuring Loyalty. No customer would want to speak well or recommend a bad Service or Experience to Friends and Family members. Based on this premise, the researchers concluded that Food Service Delivery will stimulate good Service Reviews and as such, would keep existing customers and also would attract new prospective Customers.

The Third Hypothesis (H_{03}) stated that there is no significant relationship between Servicescape and Repeat Patronage. This was tested at 5% significance level using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The result from our analysis showed a p-value of 0.000 while the alpha value was 0.05. Therefore, following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Which means that there is a significant relationship between Servicescape and Revisit Intention. Our analysis also showed Correlation Coefficient of 0.272 and Coefficient of Determination of 82%. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between Servicescape and Revisit intention. This finding agrees with the findings of Gary and Sansolo (1993). The scholars posited that Servicescape has a strong influence on Customer Perception and Decision Making about a Product or Service. With

Gary and Sansolo's assertion, an investigation by Dhar and Novemsky (2008) found that hotels that maintain good Servicescape in terms of ambience, cleanliness, spatial layout, aesthetics etc would attract more customers which would make them Repeat Visits. This study observed that the respondents Servicescape were high ranking in deciding on the brand to patronize those dining where the environment, they felt relaxed and unpressured.

The Fourth Hypothesis (Ho₄) stated that there is no significant relationship between Servicescape and Customer Loyalty. This was tested at 5% significance level using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The result from our analysis showed a p-value of 0.000 while the alpha value was 0.05. Therefore, following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted; meaning that there is a significant relationship between Servicescape and Word of Mouth. Our analysis also showed Correlation Coefficient of 0.272 and Coefficient of Determination of 82%. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between Servicescape and Customer Loyalty. Studies have shown that people speak well of places they have a good memory of. The findings of this study further buttress the fact that Servicescape helps service providers to create a lasting positive impression on their customers and create wonderful memory and experience. This could be traced to Pike and Gilmore (2001) in their works on Service Economy.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that Quality Service Delivery was vital in influencing Customers' Behaviour. The level at which the dimensions influenced Customer Decisions were of high extent. The implication was that Quality of Service delivered were vital determinants and influencers when choices were made by Customers in Fast Food Establishments in Port Harcourt.

Recommendation

The study therefore, recommended that Managers of Fast-Food Establishments in Port Harcourts should evaluate their Service Delivery Processes and have feedback mechanisms in place. These will improve their Services and Customer Experience will be enhanced.

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