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Determinant factors of consumers' choice of formal full service restaurants in Ghana

Noble Amoako Sarkodie[1*], Vida Commey[2] and Barikisu Mohamed[1]

[1]Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Sunyani Technical University, Ghana.
[2]Department of Hotel Catering and Institutional Management, Kumasi Technical University, Ghana.

The study was carried out to determine consumers' choice of formal full-service restaurants in Ghana. Survey was employed and data were collected using questionnaire. Fifty (50) consumers were selected for the study using the systematic sampling technique. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyse data gathered. The findings revealed that, all the variables in the study influence consumers' choice of formal full-service restaurants. However, the most important factors in order of ranking were: food quality and taste of food, variety of menu items, product/menu price, service quality, location of restaurants, dining environment, restaurant brand popularity, prompt service, staff cooperation and parking space were major factors that influence consumers' choice of formal full service restaurants. The study further, established that consumers demographic profiles influence their choice of formal full-service restaurant. This study, the first of its kind in Ghana, is important as it is expected to expand literature on the extent of relationship between demographic factors and consumer's choice of full-service restaurant to hospitality educators and hospitality practitioners. This study recommend that hospitality operators should focus more on food quality as well as all the attributes examined in the study in order to meet the expectations of their consumers.

Key words: Consumers, formal full-service restaurants, attributes, hedonic customers, selection.

INTRODUCTION

The consumers choice of restaurant is of paramount importance to restauranteurs, as it ensures the continuity of the business. Customers come from a variety of cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds and the majority of them have completely different criteria in choosing restaurants (Chung and Kim, 2011). Therefore a deeper understanding of consumers' selection criteria provides restaurateurs with valuable information and insights that enable them to attract and retain more consumers (Jang and Namkung, 2017).

Consequently, there is a need to understand the choice factors and their relative importance that influence the decision of restaurant patrons so that restaurateurs can offer and develop strategies accordingly (Josiam and Monteiro, 2018).

According to Chung and Kim (2011), the price of a menu is one of the most important factors that determine consumer decision-making and subsequent behaviour. Kafel and Sikora (2013) claim that restaurant consumers use price as a measure of restaurant quality because

they assume that an expensive restaurant serves better food and offers better quality. Therefore, the relative importance of restaurant choice factors differs significantly depending on restaurant price (Massawe, 2013).

The type of restaurant consumers choose to visit is another factor that influences their selection, as recognised by Hensley and Sulek (2014). Kim and Moon (2009) also, postulate that since consumers have different expectations and perceptions regarding their different dining experiences at a different type of restaurant, they also have different selection criteria when deciding where to dine. Chung and Kim (2011) contend that full-service restaurants tend to attract loyal customers who place more value on the restaurant environment, while fast-service restaurants tend to attract utilitarian customers who place value on functional benefits. The selection criterion varies depending on the type of restaurant customers want to visit (Kivela et al., 2013). Soriano (2012) claims that food quality is the other factor that influences consumers' restaurant selection behaviour. Josiam and Monteiro (2018) agree that the unique taste and ingredients of the food play an important role for consumers in choosing a restaurant. Restaurants often develop new menus and offer a variety of menu items to increase customer traffic (Mhlanga et al., 2014).

Additionally, prior research, such as Parasuraman et al. (2010), Zeithaml (2013), Rose and Thomsen (2015), Qu (2018), Josiam and Monteiro (2018) and Winer (2019) attested that the success and failure of restaurant depend on several key aspects such as price of the products, quality of the products, services provided to the customers, promotions, customer expectations, brand, physical distribution , location and taste of the food.

More so, according to Andaleeb and Conway (2016) studies in South Africa, found that formal full-service restaurants have a negative growth rate as consumers prefer to eat at fast-food restaurants. Researchers such as Ehsan (2012) and Yuncu et al. (2013) also, identify that the inability of restaurateurs to determine the key attributes that influence customers' restaurant choice as one of the major reasons for the failure of restaurants. Chung and Kim (2011) asserts that full-service restaurants are more likely to attract hedonic customers who pay more attention to restaurant environments, as compared to fast-service restaurants customers who value functional benefits.

Formal full service restaurant refers to an up market restaurant that offers table service with complete varied menus and multiple entrees for each meal period which may include soups, salads and desserts (SSA, 2013 as cited in Mhlanga et al., 2014). Most formal full service restaurants will provide customer seating with gastronomy, sophisticated service, elegant ambience and liquor service. Usually, these restaurants will not permit casual wear (Feinstein and Stefanelli, 2008). A Formal full service restaurant is characterized by offering meal courses, table service, customer seating, sophisticated service, elegant ambience, liquor service, mostly will not permit casual wear and consumers usually expect far beyond food unlike other types of restaurant where food is considered most (Mhlanga et al., 2014).

From the foregoing literature review, there had been intensive studies on different reasons for consumers' choice of restaurant types but no study have been conducted on consumers' choice of formal full-service restaurants in Ghana.

This study therefore, seeks to determine factors that influence consumers' choice of formal full service restaurant in Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana. This study, the first of its kind in Ghana, is important as it is expected to provide current data on the extent of relationship between demographic factors and consumer's choice of full -service restaurant to hospitality educators and hospitality practitioners. It is also, important that managers understand key consumers' selection criteria in order to integrate these demands into their product and service attributes to gain a competitive edge and remain sustainable. Further, a deeper understanding of consumers' selection criteria provides restaurateurs with valuable information and insights that enable them to attract and retain more consumers.This study efforts contributes to expanding literature on formal full service restaurant service quality and are suitable for international comparison which seems unknwn to exists. The study is guided by the following objectives and hypothesis:

1. To identify factors that influence consumers' choice of formal full service restaurant in Ghana.
2. To determine the impact of demographic factors on the choice of full-service restaurant.

H1O: There is no relationship between factors and consumers' choice of formal full service restaurant
H1A: There is a relationship between factors and consumers' choice of formal full service restaurant
H2O: There is no significant relationship between demographic factors and consumers' choice of restaurant.
H2A: There is a significant relationship between demographic factors and consumers' choice of restaurant.

Factors influencing consumers choice of restaurants

Hyun (2010) carried out a study on quality of food and customer satisfaction at restaurant. The outcome of their studies revealed that food quality attributes such as taste, appearance and temperature significantly affect customer satisfaction and selection of restaurant. The findings of Hyun (2010) corroborates Fungai (2017), Qu (2018) and Mohammad (2019) studies who found that quality of food greatly influence consumers' choice of eatery.

In another study, Seyed et al. (2010) studied in twenty-two districts in the Iranian capital. Questionnaire was

used to solicit data from hundred and fifty (150) respondents.The results showed that brand popularity influenced consumers' decision on restaurant.

Oswald and Tembi (2016) set out to assess the factors that affect consumer selection criteria in formal full-service restaurants in Port Elizabeth, South African. The results of their study showed that good service, quality of food, recommendations by others and good ambience, mostly influence the selection of formal full-service restaurants.

A study by Chen and Tsai (2016) also found that location of a restaurant has been well identified as a strategic success factor for a restaurant company to remain competitive in the hospitality industry. According to Chen and Tsai (2016), location of the restaurant was found to attract customers' choice of restaurants.

Similarly, Chen and Tsai (2016) came out that consumers' variety-seeking behavior is triggered to reduce boredom during repeat purchases as well as to increase the stimulation to the desired level.

In a related study, Mehdina and Tamanna (2016) sought to study factors that influence young customers to prefer the fast food. The result revealed that low priced restaurant is dominant among respondents for their choice of regular food.

A study conducted by Raghubir and Corfman (2016) revealed that sales promotion is a strategy that marketers provide to customers to meet their financial needs, to encourage repeat purchases, product trials, and brand switching behavior.Although sales promotion provides customers with immediate financial incentives (Kivela et al., 2013), it may jeopardize a brand by diverting customers' attention away from quality and toward a temporary financial incentive.

Another study by Chen and Tsai (2016) established that more people are attempting to prioritize time savings as well as a better eating environment. These factors encourage restaurants to invest in design and create a more relaxed atmosphere for customers.

In another study, Hoffman and Bateson (2017) found that personal recommendations from family and friends are perceived as more reliable than commercial advertising media and are therefore more likely to influence positive/negative customer attitudes towards a brand. Thus, in the service industry, consumers depend on subjective ratings from family and friends owning to lack of objective means to evaluate services.

Impact of demographic factors on consumers choice of restaurant

Chan and Wong's (2005) studies found that different age groups have significant influences on accommodation selection.

Furthermore, it has been found out that education has a very strong relationship with income levels, as nearly half of the populations with higher incomes have completed four years of college, whereas only 10% of the populations with lower incomes have done so (Peter et al., 2006). In addition, Chan and Wong (2005) discovered that factors influencing the choice of restaurants for visitors to Hong Kong with higher income were more influenced by 'restaurant brand' and 'incentive' than those with lower incomes.

In a related study, Rai (2020) set out to examine the impact of demographic factors on purchase intention of consumers. The results showed that, there is no significant difference between male and female attitudes to purchasing intentions. The findings also established that there is a significant difference on purchase intentions among different levels of education.

However, Rai (2020) study, contradicted Jain and Sharma (2012) studies where they found out that gender positively influenced consumers' choice of buying decisions.

In another study, Chan and Wong (2009) found that consumers from various demographics, such as age, educational level, and income level, may have different needs and expectations on important factors when making restaurant purchase decisions.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana. Figure 1 shows the map of Brong-Ahafo which is shaded red. It has 27 administrative districts. Each district is divided functionally into sub-districts. Sunyani was the regional capital of Brong - Ahafo region at the time of the study.

In this study, a survey was adopted because the respondents were out there to be reached. The target population was composed of the reachable consumers of the full-service restaurant in Bono and Ahafo regions of Ghana.

Systematic sampling technique was employed in this study. Systematic sampling method is the process of selecting a sample from a population list in an orderly manner but not randomly. The units in the population are arranged serially and then a random number is chosen to start the selection of the sample till the sample size is obtained (Kuranchie, 2021). Consequently, systematic sampling technique was used to select 50 consumers of every fifth consumer who walked into the restaurant after they were seated until the sample size for a particular restaurant was reached. This approach was possible since the researchers had a complete list of the target population of all types of restaurants and accommodation establishments with their names, addresses and telephone numbers from the hotel directory (GTA, 2018). To arrive at 50 consumers, the researchers have to select every n^{th} element in the population after calculating the sampling fraction (k). Thus, k=N/n, where N is the total population and n is the sample size. In this study, the population is made up of 250 consumers and the intended sample is 50, it is – 250/50- 5. So, the 5th interval is used in selecting the names in the study.

Having sought permission from each of the restaurant managers to conduct the study in their premises. The researchers approached the consumers after they had been seated and delivered questionnaires to them. The questionnaires covered demograhic profile of the respondents and factors that influence their choice of formal full restaurant. The researchers validated the questionnaires by given it to colleagues with good knowledge in the subject area for their scrutiny and comments. Feedback was given on each of
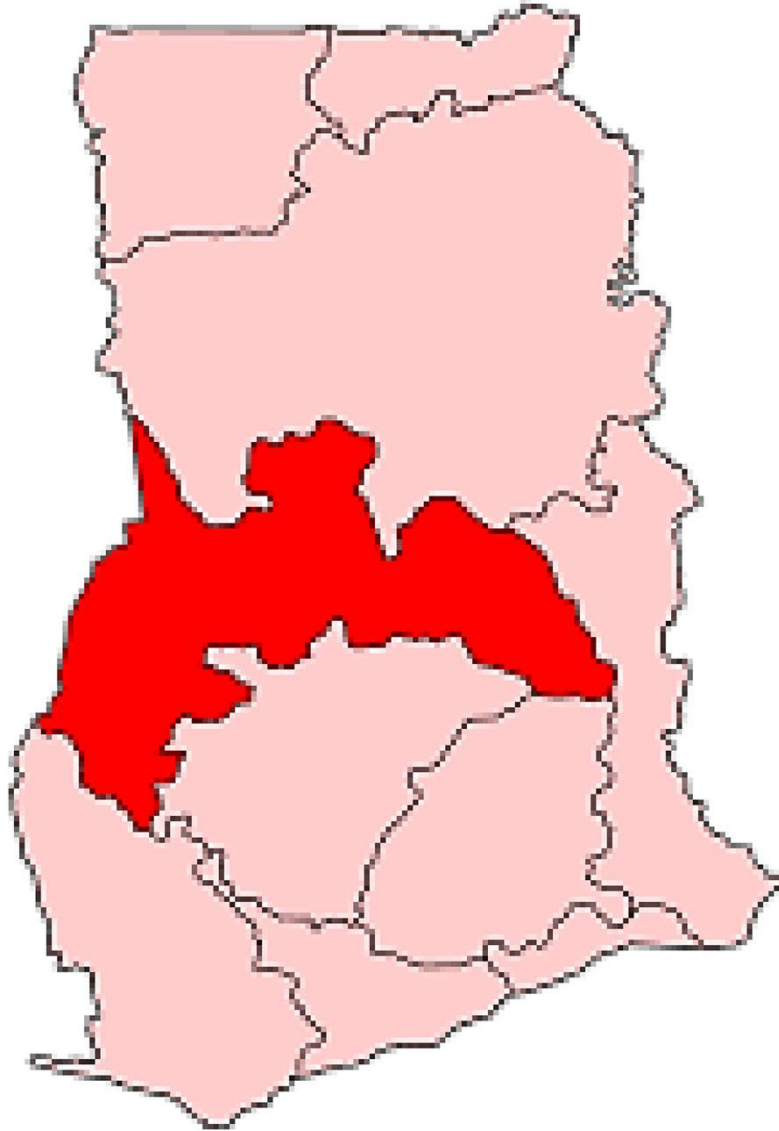
Figure 1. Map of Ghana showing Bono-Ahafo region.
Source: Adopted from FAO/WHO (2005).

the items; this led to the revision and modification of the questionnaires thereby enhancing the overall validity of this study.

The aim of the study was explained to the consumers and asked to participate if they so wished. It was emphasised that the researcher would treat the information provided as confidential and anonymous. Consumers who were willing to participate in the study received a questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were collected, checked and discussed with the respondents in case of any queries. The data were captured and analysed using the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS v. 25) which is a statistical analysis software programme capable of generating descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 present demographic profile of participants. The

results show that 24 of the male customers had been patronizing the restaurant for less than 1 year while no female customer had patronized the restaurant for less than 1 year. Again, 11 of the male customers had been patronizing the restaurant for 1-2 years with only 1 of the female customers had been patronizing the restaurant for 1-2 years. However, 10 of the female customers had been patronizing the restaurant for 3-4 years while 4 had been patronizing the restaurant for more than 5 years with no male customer patronizing the restaurants within these periods. With regard to age range, 30 male customers were aged between 20-29 years, 1 female and5 male customers were aged between 30-39 years. However, 10 female customers were aged between 40-49 years while 4 of them were aged above 50 years with

Table 1. Demographic profile of participants (N=50).

Variable	Gender		Grand total
Number of years patronizing	Female	Male	
<1	0	24	24
1-2	1	11	12
3-4	10	0	10
≥5	4	0	4
Age range			
20 -29	0	30	30
30-39	1	5	6
40-49	10	0	10
≥50+	4	0	4
Marital status			
Married	12	0	12
Single	3	35	38
Educational level			
Degree	12	0	12
DIP/HND	3	25	28
SHS	0	10	10

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Table 2. Tabulation of gender and age and education and marital status and patronizing.

Variable	Categories		
Gender	2		
Age	4		
Education	3		
Marital sStatus	2		
Patronizing	4		
Test statistics	**df**	**Value**	**Prob**
Pearson X^2	181	4902.485	0.0000
Likelihood ratio G2	181	258.9395	0.0001

Source: Field Survey (2021).

no male customer was aged within these age categories. Concerning marital status, 12 female customers were married, 3 females and 35 males were single. The implication is that none of the male customers had married. In terms of educational background, 12 female customers had attained degree with no male having degree education. In addition, 3 females and 25 males had attained HND/Diploma education while 10 males had attained Senior High School education. Table 2 show the tabulation of gender and age and education and marital status and patronizing.

It is observed that the chi square value obtained (P=0.0000) is less than 0.05, indicating there is statistically difference among the categories.

From Table 3, the mean (3.65) indicates that the variables identified are possible factors that can influence consumers' selection of restaurants. Majority of the consumers agreed (mean=3.76) that restaurant brand popularity influences consumers' selection of full-servicerestaurants. This finding is supported by Seyed et al. (2010) studies that found restaurant brand as the factor that significantly affects consumers' choice of restaurant. The implication is that when choosing a restaurant consumers consider the brand popularity.

Consumers agreed (mean=3.87) that food quality and taste influence consumers' selection of full-service

Table 3. Consumers choice of full - Service restaurant.

Consumer choice of full - service restaurant	Mean	Std. Dev.
Restaurant brand popularity	3.76	0.88
Food quality and taste	3.87	0.74
Personal or past experience with a restaurant	3.61	1.10
Product/menu price	3.80	0.78
Staff cooperation	3.67	1.12
Location of the restaurant	3.78	0.81
Brand reputation from restaurant	3.70	0.83
Service quality	3.79	0.82
Variety of menu items	3.82	0.77
Parking space	2.48	1.14
Dining environment	3.77	0.84
Prompt/quick service	3.74	0.89
Average mean	**3.65**	

Source: (Field survey, 2021), Scale: 1.0-2.4=Disagree, 2.5-3.9=Agree.

restaurants. The finding is supported by Mohammed (2019) who found that consumers are more concerned about food quality. This implies that the quality of food highly influenced consumers' choice of full service restaurant.

Consumers further, agreed (mean=3.80) that menu price influences their selection of restaurants. The finding corroborates Winer (2019) study which found that price of a product influenced consumers' choice of restaurants. The implication is that price is an important factor in consumers' choice, especially for low-income consumers.

Further, consumers agreed (mean=3.67) that staff cooperation influences consumer selection of full service restaurants. The results of this study support Adekola and Bola (2012) studies who found that a good customer-staff relationship influences customer decision to purchase hotel products and repeat visits. The implication of this result is that good customer-staff relationships can influence customer decision to repeat visit to the restaurant.

Moreso, consumers agreed (mean=3.78) that location is a factor that influence consumers' choice. The finding strengthen Davis et al. (2012) studies who observed that the location of the service providers and their accessibility are a very important selling point in the restaurant industry. The implication is that when choosing a full service restaurant, consumers evaluate the distance between their home as well as work place.

Furthermore, most of the consumers agreed (mean=3.70) that brand reputation of restaurants influences their selection of the restaurant. The finding is in line with Rose and Thomsen (2015) studies that found that brand reputation reflects a mixture of reliability, admiration, goodwill, respect and trust of a brand.

Consumers further, agreed (M=3.79) that service

quality is a factor that influences consumer choice of full service restaurant. The result corroborate Oswald and Tembi (2016) studies who found that good quality service influence consumers' choice of full service restaurant in South Africa. This implies that staff service significantly influences consumer's choice of restaurants.

Consumers again agreed (mean=3.82) that the variety of menu items is a factor that influences consumer selection of restaurants. When selecting restaurants, consumers may choose a restaurant that offers a variety of menu items (Prayag et al., 2012).

The dining environment influences consumer selection of restaurants as agreed (mean=3.77) by most of the consumers involved in the study. The finding of the study is in line with Pizam and Ellis (2016) studies that found that when the dining environment possesses unpleasant levels, it is easily noticed by customers, such as soiled tables, warm temperature, chipped crockery and noisy staff leading to dissatisfaction. The implication is that the restaurant's dining environment determines consumers' choice of patronage.

Finally, consumers agreed (mean=3.74) that prompt service influences consumers' choice of full -service restaurants. The result is similar to the findings of Lau et al. (2013) studies who found that prompt service delivery had a statistically significant influence on consumer choices of restaurants. This implies that consumers consider speedy service delivery while selecting full-service restaurants.

Generally, the mean value (mean=3.73) indicates that demographic factors have an impact on consumers' choice of full-service restaurants. Majority of the consumers agreed (mean=3.77) that taste of food is linked to the age of the consumer. As people get older, their senses of smell and taste shift. Between the ages of 40 and 50, the number of taste buds diminishes, and the

Table 4. Perceived impact of demographic factors on consumers' choice of full- service restaurant.

Perceived Impact of demographic factors on consumers' choice of restaurant	Mean	Std. Dev.
Tastes of food and restaurants are frequently linked to the age of the customer	3.77	1.04
Different age groups have significant influences on restaurant selection factors	3.68	1.10
Education levels may influence how consumers make purchasing decisions	3.80	0.94
Different educational backgrounds influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards the choice of restaurant	3.78	1.01
The marital status of customers influences the choice of restaurant	3.70	1.06
How long customers patronize restaurants influences their choice	3.64	1.13
The gender of the customer (male/female) influences the choice of restaurant	3.74	1.12
Average mean	**3.73**	

Source: (Field survey, 2021), Scale: 1.0-2.4=Disagree, 2.5-3.9=Agree.

Table 5. Regression model summary.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	0.890	0.824	0.502	0.214

Dependent variable: restaurant. Predictors: (constant): Restaurant brand popularity, food quality and taste, product/menu price, staff cooperation, location, brand reputation, service quality, variety of menu items, dining environment, and prompt service.

remaining ones begin to shrivel, losing crucial mass (Gibson, 2015). Consumers agreed (mean=3.80 and 3.78) that educational levels may influence how consumers make purchasing decisions and different educational backgrounds influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards the choice of restaurant, respectively (Table 4).

Similar effects have been observed for educational levels: individuals with higher education have reported greater influences on the choice of restaurants to dine in (Kibue, 2013). According to Korir (2015), people with higher education consider the brand popularity and reputation of the restaurant when deciding on the choice of the restaurant. The implication is that consumer level of education influence the choice of restaurant. In addition, consumers agreed (mean=3.70) that the marital status of customers influences the choice of restaurant. This finding is supported by Skoyen et al. (2013) studies who found that single people significantly influenced the choice of the restaurant over married people. Consumers agreed (mean=3.74) that the gender of the customer (male/female) influences the choice of restaurant. Gender appears to have a pervasive influence on consumers' choice of restaurant. Women tend to take more responsibility for restaurant and food selection than men (Umberson, 2016).

Regression analysis results

Since the measures used to assess the primary constructs in the model are quantitative scales, multiple regression analysis was conducted on factors that influence consumers' choice of full service restaurants. The results is presented in Table 5.

From Table 5, R-value is 0.890 which is a positive direction of R is the correlation between the observed and predicted values of the dependent variable. The values of R range from -1 to 1 (Saunders et al., 2012). The sign of R indicates the direction of the relationship (positive or negative). The absolute value of R indicates the strength, with larger absolute values indicating stronger relationships. For example, the R-value of 0.890 indicates a stronger relationship between observed and predicted values in the positive direction. The value of the coefficient of determination R^2 was 0.824, indicating that 82.4% of the variance in the dependent variable (Restaurant) was explained and predicted by independent variables (restaurant brand popularity, food quality and taste, product/menu price, staff cooperation, location of the restaurant, brand reputation, service quality, variety of menu items, dining environment, and prompt service).

The ANOVA in Table 6 indicates that the overall model was a good fit since (F-value=22.970 and p-value=0.000<0.05). This implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between the restaurant brand popularity, food quality and taste, product/menu price, staff cooperation, location, brand reputation, service quality, variety of menu items, dining environment, prompt service and choice of restaurant.

The t-value of constant produced (t = 1.103) was significant at 95% level (Sig. F<0.05), thus confirming the fitness of the model. Food quality, taste and product price were found to have a positive linearly significant

Table 6. Analysis of variance for factors influencing consumers' choice of restaurant.

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	44.991	7	14.970	22.970	0.000
Residual	97.795	52	0.652		
Total	142	60			

Dependent variable: Restaurant. Predictors: (constant): Restaurant brand popularity, food quality and taste, product/menu price, staff cooperation, location, brand reputation, service quality, variety of menu items, dining environment, and prompt service.

Table 7. Regression coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.283	3.558		1.103	0.274
Food quality and taste	0.389	0.085	0.404	4.601	0.000
Brand reputation	0.205	0.084	0.283	2.436	0.016
Location	0.198	0.065	0.218	3.040	0.003
Brand popularity	0.138	0.066	0.200	2.095	0.038
Product price	0.327	0.022	0.168	2.458	0.000
Service quality	0.447	0.039	0.387	3.659	0.032
Dining environment	0.328	0.048	0.210	4.438	0.004
Variety of menu items	0.460	0.068	0.306	2.564	0.012
Prompt service	0.149	0.059	0.204	3.088	0.040
Staff cooperation	0.364	0.047	0.410	4.208	0.020

Dependent variable: Restaurant; Predictors: (constant): Restaurant brand popularity, food quality and taste, product/menu price, staff cooperation, location, brand reputation, service quality, variety of menu items, dining environment, and prompt service.

influence on the choice of restaurant ($\beta=0.389$, $p=0.000<0.05$ and $\beta=0.327$, $p=0.000<0.05$). However, at 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence, brand reputation, location of the restaurant, brand popularity, service quality, dining environment, variety of menu items, prompt service and staff cooperationwith p-values of 0.016, 0.003, 0.038, 0.032, 0.004, 0.012, 0.040, 0.020, respectively, and therefore, their coefficients should be retained in the final model. The beta coefficients indicate the relative importance of each independent variable (restaurant brand popularity, food quality and taste, product/menu price, staff cooperation, location, brand reputation, service quality, variety of menu items, dining environment and prompt service) in influencing the dependent variable (restaurant). Table 7 show the regression coefficients.

Conclusion

The study was conducted to determine factors that influence consumers' choice of full service restaurants in Ghana. The findings conveyed that, all the variables identified in the study influence consumers' choice of formal full-service restaurants. However, the most important factors in order of ranking were: food quality and taste of food, variety of menu items, product/menu price, service quality, location of restaurants, dining environment, restaurant brand popularity, prompt service, staff cooperation and parking space were major factors that influence consumers' choice of formal full service restaurants.

The study further, established that consumers demographic profile influence their choice of formal full-service restaurant. This study would assist hospitality operators to understand current factors that consumers give importance to when choosing formal full-service restaurant and thereby develop appropriate strategies that attract and retain all consumers. Hence, it addresses the paucity of literature in the study area of hospitality operation with regard to current needs of consumers' choice of formal full-service restaurant in Ghana.

Recommendations

This study recommend that hospitality operators should focus more on food quality as well as all the attributes

examined in the study in order to meet the expectations of their consumers. Additional qualitative studies can be conducted based on this study to have a further and an in depth analysis of consumers' choice of formal full-service restaurant.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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