

# **Influence of Dining Experiences on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty in Fine Dining Restaurants in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria**

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## Influence of Dining Experiences on Customers' Satisfaction and Loyalty in Fine Dining Restaurants in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Influence of dining experiences on customers' satisfaction and loyalty in fine dining restaurants was investigated with the aim of underscoring what attracts patrons most significantly to such restaurants and its impact on productivity of the restaurants. A total of 10 restaurants were purposively selected based on their kind of service delivery and location within Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. 20 patrons were selected using systematic sampling technique at each of the restaurants, giving to a total of 200 respondents. Data were obtained using a well-structured questionnaire and analysed utilizing simple percentages and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that food quality and service quality have a significant ( $p = 0.031$  and  $p = 0.003$  respectively) influence on level of patronage at fine dining restaurant. It was discovered that there is no significant ( $p = 0.824$ ) relationship between and physical environment and level of patronage at fine dining restaurant. The study concludes that, in fine dining restaurants the quality of food offered, and service rendered are significant determinants of customers' satisfaction and predictor of customers' loyalty. Restaurateurs should focus more on maintaining and/or improving food and service quality. However, physical environment should not be neglected because it also critical to fine dining experience.

**Keywords:** Dining experiences; customers satisfaction; loyalty; fine dining; restaurant.

### 1. Introduction

Restaurant is a company that is into the business of food preparation and services to able and willing customers. Yüksel and Yüksel (2002) stated that restaurants are generally assumed to be in the business of selling food". Restaurants can be divided into various categories based on the kind of services that is been offered. They include fast food (quick services), casual dining (mid-scale) and fine dining (full service). Unlike casual dining, fine dining restaurant settings are more formal, equipped with superior quality of materials for furnishing and other kinds of fitting to achieve luxurious outlook in these restaurants (Piotrowski & Rogers, 2007). Fine dining restaurants provide excellent food with emphasis on attractive visual presentation, outstanding taste, appealing aroma to mention a few. Also, quality food ingredients are always used for preparation (Har, 2008). Special culinary skills are incorporated into food preparation and service to complement the luxurious outlook of the food service space. For example, carving in front of consumer and table-side preparation such as flambé add value customer's experience. High quality tableware and cutlery are used with perfectly starched napkins, linen and tablecloths to give assurance of a standardized service delivery to dinners. In addition, ethical dress code and service procedure are strictly adhered to in fine dining restaurants, which make it require workers that are highly trained and qualified in personnel management in order to deliver perfect and immaculate service to customers. In other words, a typical fine dining restaurant offers full-scale service customers pay a premium for fine food and impeccable service (Talib et al., 2009).

In the food service industry, there is high competition among fine dining restaurant and other food service establishment, to achieve loyal customer and repeat purchases, customer satisfaction should be an important objective to achieve in business by ensuring unforgettable dining experiences. More restaurants in different styles are continuously emerging thereby posing competitive challenges on the previously existing ones. Keeping and maintaining customers is a task that should be adequately considered as a responsibility. It is easier to maintain

already existing customers than getting a new one (Piotrowski & Rogers, 2007). It is easy for customers to find an alternative choice if they want to have a new experience or when they feel unsatisfied one place.

High income customers patronize fine dining restaurants because they carry images or meanings that provide social value for them. Hence, they perceive it as a contribution to their social status, they value the businesses that treat them the way they like to be treated, and once they have made a decision about a restaurant, they are often loyal to that particular restaurant. (Assael, 1991). It is on this note that this study investigates the influence of dining experiences on customers' satisfaction and loyalty in fine dining restaurants in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

### 1.1. Study Problem

In restaurant management, food quality, services delivery quality and physical environment are regarded as vital components of restaurant experience that are considered when evaluating the dining experience of a customer. Therefore, a meaningful combination of these vital components would result in customers' perception of high restaurant service quality. This in turn would enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Although, there have been earlier studies on influences of food, physical environment, and service delivery quality on customers' satisfaction on casual dining, there is paucity of information on the significance of such influencers in the fine dining restaurants. Given the role of dining experience in restaurant sustainability, this study intends to find out the significance of fine dining experiences on customers' satisfaction and loyalty. In view of the above, this study investigated the influence of dining experiences on customers' satisfaction and loyalty, with a view to underscoring measures for improving customer satisfaction and loyalty so as to preserve the existence of the establishment.

### 1.2. Importance of the Study

The study gains its importance from the perspective of providing knowledge on empirical findings on the importance of understanding what attracts customers to patronize a business so that focus can be on such elements. To improve the performance of a restaurant requires meeting customers' expectations in their dining experiences because when they are not met there is a tendency that the customers will migrate to another place. When such happens repeatedly, productivity is reduced, and it may threaten the existence of an organization and result into closing down. When an organization closes down due to inability to meet customers' expectation, it will lead to laying-off staff which may lead to unemployment and insecurity. When such happens, the sustainability of the industry is threatened.

### 1.3. Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of dining experiences on customers' satisfaction and loyalty in fine dining restaurants and it is guided by the following objectives:

- Investigate and understand why people patronize fine dining restaurants.
- Identify diners' perception of the quality of food served at fine dining restaurants.
- Find out diners' perception of service delivery quality at fine dining restaurants.
- Determine diners' perception of physical environment at fine dining restaurants.

#### Hypothesis I

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between food quality experiences in fine dining restaurant and customer patronage.

#### Hypothesis II

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between service delivery quality experiences in fine dining restaurant and customer patronage.

#### Hypothesis III

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between physical environment quality experiences in fine dining restaurant and customer patronage.

## 2. Overview of Literature

Hospitality industry is the aggregate of establishment and professionals that are in the business of providing care, such as accommodation, food and beverage (to mention a few) for comfort and recreation purposes with the goal of achieving customers satisfaction and economic gains. According to Hallak, *et al.*, (2019), the provision of food as a part of the necessities of life and incorporating pleasurable experience makes a restaurant unique in its own characteristic features.

## **2.1. The Position of Food Quality, Service Quality and Physical Environment in Customer's Dining Experience**

To meaningfully appraise a customer's dining experience in a typical fine dining restaurant, attention must be paid to the three main factors that contribute to making the stay of customers within the restaurant truly an experience to behold (Oh, 1999). This includes quality of the food presented to the dinner, the mode and activities that surrounds presentation and reciprocal gesture to dinners calls or request and the atmosphere/environment in which the aforementioned takes place (Canny, 2014). Customers will have certain perception of the dining experience they are about to encounter before going to an up-scale/full-service restaurant (Sukalamakala & Boyce, 2007).

Ryu & Han (2010) categorized the three main components on dining experience into two (the tangibles; comprising of food quality and physical environment and the intangibles; which comprise of service delivery qualities).

Food quality refers appropriateness of the food served for consumption, the measuring indicators includes: food temperature, freshness, overall acceptance, aroma and taste. According to Peri, (2006) quality food can only bring about customer satisfaction when met with good service delivery and physical environment. Quality food is regarded as a major influencer of customer patronage, satisfaction and post-dining behavioral intentions (Ofurum & Agwu, 2011). Ryu and Han (2011) reported that customers want quality food and services to achieve good experience and satisfaction of needs. According to Mustapha et al., (2014) customers do not patronize upscale restaurants to only sate their hunger but for pleasure, entertainment, social interaction, convenience, mood transformation and time saving. Ma et al. (2011) reported in an earlier study that the most important factor influencing customer gratification in a restaurant is food. Sulek and Hensley (2004) in an earlier study also confirmed the significance of food quality in the hospitality industry. According to Ha and Jang (2010), positive relationship exists between consumer loyalty and food quality, Lim (2010) equally reported that customer satisfaction or loyalty and food performance are connected. Namkung and Jang (2007), posits that when customers accomplish great experience and get satisfied in a restaurant, they share positive news about the product and services amongst their pairs and encourage them to patronize the restaurant.

Although food has been acknowledged to be the core product of restaurant business, the quality of service delivery is of greater importance in fine dining restaurants, due to the fact that the services rendered are people-oriented. Service quality has been reported to originate from employee-customer interaction through the ability of restaurants to provide the promised service accurately. Employee's professional appearance, knowledge, confidence and courtesy in dealing with customers are germane in achieving customers' satisfaction (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006). Namkung and Jang (2007) reported service excellence in their previous study to be the major factor for extremely gratified restaurant patrons. Similarly, Ladhari, et al. (2008) reported in another study that service quality is a key predecessor of fine dining satisfaction. None the less, Andaleeb and Conway (2006), in their study on customer satisfaction in fine dining restaurants, found that service quality is the greatest determinant of customer dining experience, service quality was reported to be more significant than food quality, physical design and price. Earlier scholars have reported that there are five dimensions through which service quality can be evaluated, they include: assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles (Kukoyi and Iwuagwu, 2015; Parasuramam et'al., 1988).

Aside from restaurant's food quality and service quality aspects, it has been reported that the physical environment of a restaurant contributes to customers' dining experiences and positively influence customers' satisfaction. Physical environment components includes the restaurant hall function space, interior and exterior design and fittings, colour and lightning of mention a few. All these stimulate a customer's dining experience (Ivyanno, 2014). Githiri (2017) reported that physical environment components in a restaurant are significant in increasing the financial performance, customer satisfaction and customer's intention to have a repeat visit. Also, dining atmospherics are critical in influencing customers' level of satisfaction, simply because customer responses to the environment form part of their consumption experience (Ha & Jang 2012). In addition, Han and Ryu (2009) studied the impact of environmental factors such as layout and comforts on customer's satisfaction in restaurants. They found that environmental components have huge impact. Canny (2014) in a separate study also reported that environmental constituents significantly influence customer's satisfaction in a restaurant.

## **2.2. Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Technically, satisfaction can be described as a state of emotional comfort with respect to a given thing or situation while loyalty can be described as behavioral expression of interest in something. Customer satisfaction in the service industry can be determined through the evaluation of previous perceptions of product/service quality (expectation) and actual service experienced (Chen & Wang, 2009). According to Har (2008) researchers and industry professionals have known the significance of customer satisfaction as a contributor to market share and profitability of a company. Organizations mostly consider employing customer-satisfaction measures because they are aware that satisfied customers are crucial for any business to succeed. Earlier researchers have reported in their studies that food quality, variety in menu, good ambience, attitude of front-line workers and consistent

quality service delivery (to mention a few) have influence on customer satisfaction and dining experience (Andaleeb & Conway 2006).

According to Ladhari et al. (2008), customer loyalty in any business largely depends on customer satisfaction. Creating and maintaining customer loyalty amongst new and readily existing customers is beneficial to a business. Bowen & Chen (2001) reported that firms reduce their cost of marketing and increase their profits by striving towards customer loyalty. A loyal customer is more likely to promote an organisation through positive word-of-mouth and spend more money patronizing a brand (Ladhari et al., 2008). None the less, loyal customers are less costly to serve because they are acquainted with the product/service and require less information (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). In recent years, most service providers now focus on achieving customer loyalty by ensuring the delivery of quality (Yang & Peterson, 2004).

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are fundamental to the successful running of a business. Although, satisfaction does not lead to loyalty immediately, it is gradual. Customers would have experience various phases and processes of service delivery before conviction (Arantola, 2000). Customer loyalty is simply the benefit of customer satisfaction. According to Fornell et al. (1996), customer satisfaction plays a vital role in customer loyalty because as satisfaction is achieved at a point, customer loyalty may equally decrease once the level of satisfaction drops below a certain level. Chi (2005) reported that there is a positive strong association between customer service and loyalty and that customer satisfaction contributes to raising revenue and earnings of an organisation.

### **2.3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory**

The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory was proposed by Richard L. Oliver and was completed for use in 1980. The theory is suitably applicable for use when explaining issues related to customer satisfaction within the context of service delivery in a business. Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory posits that customers compare the performance of service rendered to them against their perceived expectation from the service provider (Oliver, 1980). This establishes the fact that in most cases, customers usually would have had an expectation about the service they are about to encounter even before the service is rendered. The theory therefore explains post-purchase reactions to services as a function of what is expected or perceived by customers. When service rendered meets up with customer's expectation or even surpass it, the 'disconfirmation' is positive, which this amounts to satisfaction, and this is believed to have positive impact on patronage. Where as, when it is the other way round, that is, when the service rendered falls short of customer's expectation, the 'disconfirmation' is negative, which amounts to dissatisfaction in the service rendered, and this is equally believed to have a negative impact on patronage.

The relevance of Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory to this research is based on the fact that hospitality managers must know that customers have perceived expectation of their service delivery. Hence efforts must be put in place at all times to know what customers want and meet up with their expectations or even surpass it in order to make them satisfied. In addition, hospitality managers must understand that meeting up with customer's expectations would positively influence customer patronage in their business which would ultimately lead to improved productivity and profitability in the long run.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey method as the research design. The study was conducted in the city of Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling method was used to select ten restaurants offering full-scale service where customers have fine dining experience in the study area. Systematic techniques were further adopted through simple random sampling (with replacement) to select every fifth customers that walk in to patronize the selected restaurants. A total of 20 respondents were carefully selected from each of the restaurants selected for the study, which cumulate to a total of 200 respondents for the study. Data were collected through the use of a closed ended questionnaire which was physically administered to the respondents by the researchers. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages, means, standard deviation and Pearson correlation to analyze the perception of customers on food quality, service delivery quality and physical environment on loyalty and satisfaction at the restaurants.

### **4. Results and Discussion of Findings**

#### **4.1. Reasons why Customers Patronise Fine Dining Restaurant**

Table 1 reveals factors that influence diner's decision for patronage in fine dining restaurant. Majority of fine dining restaurant patrons are attracted to it because of service quality (21.5%), food quality (20.0% and recreation (17.5%). Other parameters include meetings (14.0%) and dining atmosphere (11.5%) among others.



This result is in agreement with the position of Ryu and Han (2011) that customers want quality food and services to achieved good experience and satisfaction of need. The result also conforms with the position of Mustapha et'al. (2014), that customers do not patronize upscale restaurants only to help sate hunger but for convenience, pleasure, entertainment, time saving, social interaction and mood transformation.

**Table (1):** Reasons why Customers Patronise Fine Dining Restaurant

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Price	12	6.0	6th
Business meeting	28	14.0	4th
Food quality	40	20.0	2nd
Dining atmosphere	23	11.5	5th
Service quality	43	21.5	1st
Recreation	35	17.5	3rd
Celebration	10	5.0	7th
Workplace	4	2.0	9th
Unidentified	5	2.5	8th
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Mean = 4.1633</b>			
<b>Standard Deviation = 1.77847</b>			

Source: field survey, 2021

#### 4.2. Description of Customers Perception on Food Quality at the Restaurant

Table 2 revealed that 97.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that the restaurant's food presentation is visually attractive. This is in line with the findings of the Har (2008) whose definition of fine dining restaurant is the restaurant that provides excellent food which emphasis prominence with visual presentation, the outstanding taste of food. Table 2 also shows that 97.5% of the customers agreed that the restaurant offers variety of menu items while 2.7% disagreed. Furthermore, the table revealed that 95.5% of the customers agreed that the restaurant offers fresh food while 0.5% disagreed. Also, the table shows that 90.5% of the customers agreed that the restaurant serve food at an appropriate temperature while 3.5% disagreed. 93% of the customers agreed that the food is served in a timely manner while 2.0% disagreed. In addition, 93.5% of the customers where of the opinion that the restaurant's food taste good while 0.5% disagreed. Table 2 equally shows that 89.5% of the customer agreed that the restaurant's food has a right consistency while 2.5% disagreed. The results are in agreement with the finding of Namkung and Jang (2007) opined that some other factors like quality of food, persuasive services provided, freshness of food, delivery servicing timings, variety of foods, plays a vital role in the dining experience.

**Table (2):** Description of Customers' Perception of Food quality at the Restaurants

S/N	Food Quality Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1	Food presentation is virtually attractive	134 (67.0)	61 (30.5)	5 (2.5)	-	-	4.6450	0.52951
2	Restaurant offers variety of menu items	123 (61.5)	72 (36.0)	4 (2.0)	1 (0.5)	-	4.5850	0.56067
3	Restaurant offers fresh food	127 (63.5)	64 (32.0)	8 (4.0)	1 (0.5)	-	4.5850	0.59544
4	Food is served at appropriate temperature	113 (56.3)	70 (35.0)	10 (5.0)	3 (1.5)	4 (2.0)	4.4250	0.82326
5	Food is served in a timely manner	110 (55.0)	76 (38.0)	10 (5.0)	4 (2.0)	-	4.4600	0.68611
6	Food tastes good	116 (58.0)	71 (35.5)	12 (6.0)	1 (0.5)	-	4.5100	0.63396
7	Food has a right consistency	117 (58.5)	62 (31.0)	16 (8.0)	4 (2.0)	1 (0.5)	4.4500	0.76841

Source: Field Survey, 2021

SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

#### 4.3. Description of Customers Perception of Service Quality at the Restaurant

Table 3 revealed that 91% of the respondents can trust the employees of the restaurant while 2.0% disagreed. It also revealed that 93.0% of the respondents feel safe in their transactions with the restaurant's employees while 1.0% do not feel safe with their transactions with the employees. 91.5% of the respondents agreed that the employees of the restaurant are polite while 2.0% disagreed with the statement. Table 3 also shows that 93.0% of the respondents agreed that the employees are knowledgeable about the food and beverage menu items offers in the restaurant while 3.0% disagreed on that. The table further revealed further that 91.0% of the respondents are of opinion that the restaurant is open at convenient hours while 4.5% disagreed on that. 91.0% of the diners agreed that the employees of the restaurant give customers personal attention while 2.5% disagreed. Furthermore, the table below shows that 89.5% of the respondents were in agreement that the manager is always available to speak to if they have any problem while 4.0% disagreed. Also, 84.5% of the respondents agreed that the amount of time they were kept waiting is kept to a minimum while 2.5% disagreed. 89.5% of the respondents agreed that they receive prompt service from the restaurant's employees while 2.0% disagreed. The table also shows that 93.0% agreed that employees of the restaurant anticipate their needs while 1.5% disagreed. Table 3 equally shows that 92.5% of the respondents agreed that food orders are taken correctly while 1.0% disagreed. It was further revealed that 93.0% of the respondents agreed that the bills are computed correctly while 1.0 % disagreed on that. 84.0% of the respondents agreed that the restaurant is clean while 1.0% disagreed on that. The table also shows that 91.0% agreed that the employees have clean, neat uniforms while 2.0% disagreed.

**Table (3): Description of Customers' Perception of Service Quality at the Restaurants**

S/N	Service Quality Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1	You can trust employees of the restaurant	96 (48.0)	86 (43.0)	15 (7.5)	1 (0.5)	2 (1.0)	4.3650	0.73106
2	You feel safe in your transactions with the restaurant's employee	103 (51.50)	83 (41.5)	12 (6.0)	2 (1.0)	-	4.4350	0.65415
3	Employees of the restaurant are polite	103 (51.5)	80 (40.0)	13 (6.5)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.5)	4.3950	0.76281
4	Employees are knowledgeable about food and beverage menu items	109 (54.8)	76 (38.2)	8 (4.0)	6 (3.0)	-	4.4472	0.71491
5	The restaurant is opened at convenient hours	101 (50.5)	81 (40.5)	9 (4.5)	8 (4.0)	1 (0.5)	4.3650	0.79051
6	Employees of the restaurant give customers personal attention	105 (52.5)	77 (38.5)	13 (6.5)	3 (1.5)	2 (1.0)	4.4000	0.76349
7	Manager is available to speak to, if I have a problem	101 (50.5)	77 (31.0)	14 (7.0)	7 (3.5)	1 (0.5)	4.3500	0.80044
8	The amount of time I am kept waiting is kept to a minimum	100 (50.0)	69 (34.5)	26 (13.0)	5 (2.5)	-	4.3200	0.79420
9	You receive prompt service from the restaurant's employees	97 (48.5)	82 (41.0)	17 (8.5)	4 (2.0)	-	4.3600	0.72320
10	Employees of the restaurant anticipate the customers' needs	105 (52.5)	81 (40.5)	11 (5.5)	2 (1.0)	1 (0.5)	4.4350	0.69150
11	Food orders are taken correctly	111 (55.5)	74 (37.0)	13 (6.5)	2 (1.0)	-	4.9700	0.84130
12	The bills are computed correctly	131 (65.5)	55 (27.5)	12 (6.0)	2 (1.0)	-	4.5750	0.65308
13	The restaurant is clean	132 (66.0)	56 (28.0)	10 (5.0)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	4.5829	0.66051
14	The restaurant is quite	126 (63.0)	63 (31.5)	10 (5.0)	1 (0.5)	-	4.5700	0.61399
15	The employees have clean/neat uniforms	133 (66.5)	50 (25.0)	13 (6.5)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.5)	4.5450	0.76872

Source: Field Survey, 2021

SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

#### 4.4. Description of Customers Perception of Physical Environment at the Restaurant

Table 4 revealed that 95.0% of the respondents were in agreement that layout makes it easy for them to move around while 0.5% disagreed. 89.5% of the respondents agreed that the interior design is visually attractive while 0.5% of the respondents disagreed.

From table 4, it can be deduced that 90.0% of the respondents agreed that the restaurant uses colors that creates a sense of pleasant ambience while 0.5% disagreed. 95.5% of the respondents also agreed that Lighting creates a sense of comfortable atmosphere. The table further revealed that 91.0% of the respondents agreed that the restaurant's seating arrangement makes them feel comfortable while 1.0% did not agree. Furthermore, it can be deduced from table 4 that 92.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that the restaurant's furniture (e.g., dining table, chair) are of high quality while 2.5% disagreed. 86.0% agreed that the style of the restaurant positively influence their mood while 3.0% disagreed.

**Table (4):** Description of Customers' Perception of Physical Environment at the Restaurant

S/N	Physical Environment Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1	Layout makes it easy for me to move around within the restaurant	122 (61.0)	68 (34.0)	9 (4.5)	-	1 (0.5)	4.5500	0.63206
2	The interior design is virtually attractive	109 (54.5)	70 (35.0)	21 (10.5)	-	-	4.6900	0.63869
3	The restaurant used colours that create a pleasant ambience	122 (61.0)	58 (29.0)	19 (9.5)	-	1 (0.5)	4.5000	0.70888
4	Lightning creates a comfortable atmosphere	122 (61.0)	69 (34.5)	9 (4.5)	-	-	4.5650	0.58092
5	Seating arrangement makes me feel comfortable	120 (60.0)	62 (31.0)	16 (8.0)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	4.4950	0.70886
6	Furniture is of high quality and design	114 (57.0)	71 (35.5)	10 (5.0)	2 (1.0)	3 (1.5)	4.4550	0.76872
7	Style of the restaurant positively influence my mood	123 (61.5)	49 (24.5)	22 (11.0)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.5)	4.4300	0.85953

Source: Field Survey, 2021

**SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree**

**4.5. Description of Level of Customers' Satisfaction**

Table 5 indicates that 94.5% of the respondents said they were satisfied with the food served, 92% of were satisfied with the finishing and interior décor/design of the restaurant, 90% were satisfied with the server's attitudes. Table 5 further reveals that the 96.0% of the respondents said that they got value for the money spent in the restaurant.

**Table (5):** Description of Level of Customers' Satisfaction

S/N	Customer Satisfaction Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1	I am satisfied with food service in this restaurant	114 (57.0)	75 (37.5)	10 (5.0)	-	1 (0.5)	4.7600	0.62361
2	I am satisfied with the finishing and interior décor/design	90 (45.0)	94 (47.0)	15 (7.5)	1 (0.5)	-	4.3650	0.64331
3	I am satisfied with the workers' attitude in this restaurant	79 (39.5)	102 (51.0)	19 (9.5)	-	-	4.3000	0.63404
4	I got value for the money spent in this restaurant	97 (48.5)	77 (38.5)	17 (8.5)	-	6 (3.5)	4.3147	0.87040

Source: Field Survey, 2021

**SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree**

**4.6. Description of Level of Customers' Loyalty**

Table 6 reveals that 92.5% of the respondents said that they will say positive things about the restaurant to other people, 93.5% said that they will recommend it to someone who seeks their advice on where to dine. 92.0% of the respondents said they will encourage friends and relatives to do business with the restaurant, 84% said they will consider the restaurant as their first choice to dine in a fine dining restaurant. Table 6 further reveals that 60.5% of the respondents said that they will purchase from the restaurant even if it increases the price of the service. 58.5% said if other restaurants provide a cheaper price, they will change the restaurant for future purchase while 82.0% said they will remain loyal to the restaurant for services.



**Table (6):** Description of Level of Customers' Loyalty

S/N	Customers' Loyalty Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1	I will say positive things about the restaurant to other people	90 (45.0)	94 (47.0)	14 (7.0)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	4.3550	0.67910
2	I will recommend this place to anyone who seek my advice on restaurant	80 (40.0)	107 (53.5)	11 (5.5)	2 (1.0)	-	4.3250	0.62557
3	I will encourage friend and relative to patronize this restaurant	80 (40.0)	104 (52.0)	14 (7.0)	-	1 (0.5)	4.3166	0.646767
4	I will consider this restaurant my 1 <sup>st</sup> choice for dining experience	66 (33.0)	102 (51.0)	27 (13.5)	3 (1.5)	2 (1.0)	4.1508	0.74358
5	I will patronise this restaurant even if there is increase in price	37 (18.5)	84 (42.0)	51 (25.5)	5 (2.5)	23 (11.5)	3.5350	1.16859
6	If other restaurants offers a cheaper price, I will go there to make purchase	57 (28.5)	60 (30.0)	61 (30.5)	10 (5.0)	12 (6.0)	3.7089	1.70895
7	I will remain loyal to this restaurant for its services	82 (41.0)	84 (42.0)	30 (15.0)	3 (1.5)	1 (0.5)	4.2211	0.78583

Source: Field Survey, 2021

SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

## 4.7. Result of Hypothesis

### 4.7.1. Hypothesis I

**H<sub>0</sub> I:** There is no significant relationship between food quality experience in fine dining restaurant and customer patronage.

Table 7 shows correlations analysis of the respondents' opinion on the parameters that provided information on how the level of patronage of the customers is influenced by the food quality offered by the restaurant. The table also shows the Pearson correlation value ( $r$ ) = 0.153 and the P value = 0.031. Since the p-value (0.031) is less than the significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, therefore the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This result shows that there is a significant relationship between the level of patronage and food quality.

**Table (7):** Correlations

		food quality	Patronage
food quality	Pearson Correlation	1	-.153*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.031
	N	200	198
Patronage	Pearson Correlation	-.153*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	
	N	198	198

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: field survey, 2021.

### 4.7.2. Hypothesis II

**H<sub>0</sub> II:** There is no significant relationship between service delivery quality experience in fine dining restaurant and customer patronage.

Table 8 also shows correlations analysis of the respondents' opinion on the parameters that provided information on how the level of patronage of the customers is influenced by the service quality offers by the restaurant. The table also shows the Pearson correlation value ( $r$ ) = 0.211 and the P value = 0.003. Since the p-value (0.003) is less than the significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, therefore the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This result shows that there is a significant relationship between the level of patronage and service quality.

**Table (8): Correlations**

		Patronage	Service Delivery
Patronage	Pearson Correlation	1	-.211**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	198	198
Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	-.211**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	198	200

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: field survey, 2021.

#### 4.7.3. Hypothesis III

**H<sub>0</sub> III:** There is no significant relationship between physical environment experience in fine dining restaurant and customer patronage

Table 9 also shows correlations analysis of the respondents' opinion on the parameters that provided information on how the level of patronage of the customers is influenced by the physical environment of the restaurant. The table also shows the Pearson correlation value ( $r$ ) = 0.016 and the P value = 0.824. Since the p-value (0.824) is greater than the significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the level of patronage and physical environment.

**Table (9): Correlations**

		Patronage	Physical Environment
Patronage	Pearson Correlation	1	-.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.824
	N	198	198
Physical environment	Pearson Correlation	-.016	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.824	
	N	198	200

Source: field survey, 2021.

#### 4.8. Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study revealed that amongst the nine (9) variables considered for investigating reasons why people patronise fine dining restaurants, service delivery quality and food quality were majorly (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively) reasons why people patronise fine dining restaurants. Dining restaurant atmosphere ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. This implies that, while a comfortable environment and facilities that can promote recreation are required in a fine dining restaurant, quality service delivery and quality food are the most important reasons why people patronise fine dining restaurant. Although recreational feeling can only be experienced in an atmosphere of comfort and serenity in addition to beautified ambience where customers can have a sense of being pampered and treated like "Kings and Queens" in their own right. This justifies the importance of a blend of quality physical environment with quality food and service delivery in a fine dining restaurant.

The study also reveals that 97.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that the restaurants' food presentation were visually attractive, 97.5% of the customers also agreed that the restaurant offers variety of menu items, 95.5% of the customers agreed that the restaurant offers fresh food, 90.5% of the customers agreed that the restaurant serve food at an appropriate temperature, 93% of the customers agreed that the food is served in a timely manner, 93.5% of the customers where of the opinion that the restaurant's food taste good, 89.5% of the customer agreed that the restaurant's food has a right consistency while 2.5% disagreed. The results are in agreement with the finding of Namkung and Jang (2007) who reported that some other factors like quality of food, persuasive services provided, freshness of food, delivery service timings, variety of foods, plays a vital role in the dining experience.

The investigation further shows that 91% of the respondents said they can trust the employees of the restaurant, 93.0% of the respondent feel safe in their transactions with the restaurant's employees, 91.5% of the respondents agreed that the employees of the restaurant are polite, 93.0% agreed that the employees are knowledgeable about the food and beverage menu items offers in the restaurant, 91.0% are of the opinion that the restaurant is open at convenient hours, 91.0% of the diners agreed that the employees of the restaurant give customers personal attention. 89.5% of the respondents were in agreement that the manager is always available to speak to if they have a problem, 84.5% were in the agreement that the amount of time they are kept waiting is

kept to a minimum 89.5% of the respondents agreed that they receive prompt service from the restaurant's employees, 93.0% agreed that employees of the restaurant anticipate their needs, 92.5% of the respondents agreed that food orders are taken correctly, the findings also shows that 93.0% of the respondents agreed that the bills are computed correctly, 84.0% of the respondents agreed that the restaurant is clean, 91.0% agreed that the employees have clean, neat uniforms. The findings deduced that all the parameters were upheld by the respondents to play an important role in food quality, the percentage of respondents who agreed were much higher than those who either disagreed or undecided.

Furthermore, based on the parameters used by the researcher to measure the physical environment of the fine dining restaurant, 95.0% of the respondents were in agreement that layout makes it easy for them to move around, 89.5% agreed that the interior design is visually attractive, 90.0% of the respondents agreed that the restaurant uses colors that create a sense of pleasant ambience, 95.5% agreed that Lighting creates a sense of comfortable atmosphere. The result further reveals that 91.0% of the respondents agreed that the restaurant's seating arrangement makes them feel comfortable, 92.5% were in the opinion that the restaurant's furniture (e.g., dining table, chair) are of high quality, 86.0% agreed that the style of the restaurant positively influence their mood. This is in conformity with the position of Ha and Jang (2012) and Canny (2014) that dining atmospherics are critical in influencing customers' level of satisfaction.

The results of the hypotheses revealed that food quality has a great influence on level of patronage at fine dining restaurant with p-value 0.031 less than significant value of 0.05. It was also found that there is a strong relationship between service quality and the level of patronage with p-value of 0.003 a less the significant value of 0.05. The results further showed that there is no significant relationship between physical environment and the level of patronage with p-value 0.824 greater that the significant value of 0.05. This meant that more attention should be given to food quality and service delivery quality. Therefore, the more restaurant operators pay attention to improving food quality and service quality, the higher the level of patronage that would be recorded in their restaurants and this would result into higher productivity and profitability. This result is in agreement with the position of Ivyanno (2014), Namkung and Jan's (2007) and Ofurum and Agwu (2011) in their separate studies which focus on the factors that influence dining experience of restaurant patrons. The researchers reported that, quality food and service delivery are major influencers of customers satisfaction, patronage and post dining behavioral intentions. Therefore, satisfaction of restaurant patrons must be given top priority to retain customers.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that food quality and service quality significantly influence customers' patronage in fine dining restaurants. Also, physical environment does not significantly influence the customers' decision to dine in a fine dining restaurant. However, physical environment compliments dining experience.

### 5.1. Recommendation

Since majority of fine dining restaurant patrons patronize it because of their perceived high service quality and food quality, restaurateurs should endeavor to always provide high quality service delivery and quality food without compromising a recreation inclined dining atmosphere to satisfy customers needs at all times. Therefore, restaurant managers need to continuously look into the attributes of dining experiences and how it influences customers' satisfaction and loyalty if they want to remain in business.

### 5.2. Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study is limited by time and funds to enable the researchers cover a larger representative sample of the study population. Also, the possible influence of demographic characteristics of customers on the subject matter was not considered in this article. Future researchers may wish to cover a larger scope in this area of study and as well underscore the influence of demographic characteristics of consumers on the subject matter.

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