



Assessing the Impact of Sanitation on Customer Retention: A Survey of Restaurants in the Tamale Metropolis

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Abstract

In the hospitality industry customer perception and satisfaction are largely hooked upon quality of service in the quest to retaining customers in the restaurants. This study is aimed at examining the impact of sanitation on customer retention in restaurants in the Tamale Metropolis. Some of the key elements that were used to examine the study were customer perception and satisfaction on sanitation variables such as dining area cleanliness, employee hygiene, outside environment cleanliness and food contact surface cleanliness. Participants in this study included customers in the restaurants. The convenient sampling and lottery sampling methods were employed for this study. The total number of restaurants was 30 while 543 customers were selected in the restaurants. Customer perception of sanitation variables had significant effect on their return intention. Customers were also highly satisfied with the sanitation level in restaurants and that influenced their retention. It is however imperative for all food service managers to uphold the issues of sanitation seriously in order to ensure customer retention.

Subject Areas

Management Information Systems, Management Organization, Managerial Economics

Keywords

Hospitality, Cleanliness, Perception, Sanitation, Retention, Customer Satisfaction and Employee

1. Introduction

A large percentage of the inhabitants of urban areas depend on food service pro-

viders for at least one meal in a day according to personal observation. Eating out in the UK is now part of most consumers, with 62% stating they dine out during the evening while 51% claim they dine out in restaurants during the day [1]. With the growing urbanization and economic activities in Ghana the situation is not different from that of the UK.

A number of Ghanaian entrepreneurs in the hospitality and food industry have taken advantage of the increasing demand for local and continental dishes to set up food selling spots. The increase in the number of these food joints has raised concerns among many Ghanaians and foreigners regarding the sanitary conditions under which they prepare and sell the food to customers. Food service is provided by restaurant operators, local food joints, and wayside food sellers. Sanitation in these premises is therefore a major concern to many. One may ask what actually sanitation is about. Sanitation is “an applied science that incorporates the principles of design, development, implementation, maintenance, restoration, and/or improvement of hygienic practices and conditions” [2].

More people are concerned about the safety of food than they are about fat or sodium content of food [3]. Specifically, food hygiene is the major food safety concern when consumers dine out. Several findings have reported that consumers commonly give negative perception toward the safety of food served at restaurant due to their concern about the level of food hygiene practices and will select restaurants that will meet their standard for quality and value [3] [4]. In the findings of [3], she stated that “...Consumers’ food safety perceptions towards the restaurant industry are inconsistent with their purchase behaviour”.

It is generally viewed that good sanitation practices in preparation and service of food lead to healthy eating while bad sanitation practices will lead to food contamination and subsequently food-borne diseases. According to [5] approximately 19,000 Ghanaians die each year from diarrhoea, 90% of which are directly attributed to poor sanitation. [6] reported that an estimation of one in forty Ghanaians is suffering from serious food-borne disease. These are mostly as a result of eating food prepared or served under poor sanitary conditions. Sanitation within and around food joints will indicate whether customers will return to food joints or not. From the views from individuals, it shows that sanitation within and around food joints is an important topic for food service managers. Some customers may complain about a sanitation problem encountered while others may choose to be silent.

From the statement of [7], customer expectation must be exceeded if loyalty is to be obtained and maintained. A high level of sanitation practices coupled with other factors lead to repeat patronage, customer loyalty and recruiting new customers by enhancing the reputation of restaurants [3]. It takes four to six times as much to create a customer as it does to maintain an existing one [8]. This suggests that it is much important to adhere to maintaining sanitation and quality service delivery than to allow customers to be dissatisfied with conditions of the premises. Other than sanitation, most research also shows that the most important factors influencing customer decision when choosing an eating spot are

food quality, service quality and the value for money [9]. Several findings have reported that consumers commonly give negative perception towards the safety of food served at restaurant due to their concern about the level of food hygiene practices [3].

From the statement of [7], customers' decision should be based on physical evidence such as the look and credibility of the sales persons or by word-of-mouth of an existing satisfied customer. Customer satisfaction has been seen to have great impacts on customer loyalty, future purchase as well as customer retention [10]. Some customers enjoy seeing food servers in nice outfits. Besides the assertion that customer satisfaction leads to customer retention, Customer satisfaction has no direct impact on new entrants [11].

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Cleanliness and sanitation may be one of the most important factors in attracting new customers and in keeping the ones you have already got. The Tamale Metropolis has grown tremendously in terms of businesses and human traffic within a span of about five years. This growth has also called for the demand for food with local entrepreneurs "flooding" the whole Metropolis with food joints such as restaurants, fast food spots, chop bars and wayside food sellers. As a result of the rush for food most food service providers do not seek permission before setting up their premises. Some of these are sited at unhygienic environments posing danger to the safety of consumers. Customers normally buy and eat the food at the dining areas of these establishments or take it away. In some of these establishments, food is not served under hygienic conditions; tables are not promptly cleared leaving particles of food on the tables as well as on the floor. Waiters also sometimes do not appear professionally and neatly. Some food servers in these places also sometimes use their hands to handle money given to them by customers and also use the same bare hands to serve food. All these practices may lead to the customer making a decision on repurchase of food at a perceived spot.

1.2. Research Questions

- 1) Will customer perception on sanitation practices bring about their retention?
- 2) Will customer satisfaction about sanitation in food joints bring about their retention?
- 3) Can poor nature of ventilation and other variables influence customer retention?

1.3. Organisation of the Study

This article is organized into introduction, statement of the study, research question organisation of the study, literature review, methodology, study location, population of the study, sample and sample techniques, instruments for data collection, pretesting of instruments, data collection procedures, methods of data

analysis, results, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Relationship between Customer Perception, Satisfaction and Retention

Cognitive psychology theory defines perception as “the cognitive event by which a person gives meaning to each situation/stimulus accordingly to his/her values, beliefs and attitudes” [12]. Customer perception about a service or product is an important dimension which is under consideration nowadays in the eyes of consumers [13]. This means that consumers will consider the sanitation in the restaurant as an important factor. Customer satisfaction is due to changes in perceived value, customer expectation and service quality [14]. This therefore suggests that satisfaction by customers will lead to their retention. They also found out that there is high relationship between customers’ perceived value and customer satisfaction. From the view of [15], customer perceptions of service are subject to the characteristics of service providers. Steven *et al.* (1995) as cited in [16], also added that the greater the perception of service quality, the greater the intention to return and to recommend. This matches with the finding of [17] that, customer perception impacted on customer satisfaction which, in turn, impacted on loyalty.

As [13] cited from the study of Gummesson (1998), that improvement in customer perceived quality will increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability of a service provider. As stated by [18] that, perception of restaurant service quality directly influences the perception of restaurant image. Numerous researchers have stated that, to survive and prosper in restaurant environment, perceived service quality and customer satisfaction are critical indicators and affirm effectiveness because they are closely related to financial performance [4].

The study of [19] suggests that, customer perception has a direct relationship with customer satisfaction and this will subsequently lead to retention of customers. This confirms the view of [17] that, a causal relationship exists between service quality and satisfaction, and that perceptions of service quality affect feelings of satisfaction which, in turn, influence future purchase behaviour.

The study of [20], revealed that perceived quality of physical environment was an important factor affecting customer satisfaction. Restaurant enhances its competitiveness when it relies on the customer perception of its overall service quality in comparison to other competitors [21]. This falls in line with the study of [22] that, there are too many restaurants available to customers in the USA and therefore participants stated that they will not patronise food from restaurant of a poor service. The two statements above suggest that customers will not make a return purchase from a restaurant with poor service if there are several alternative restaurants to choose from. However, some customers may make a return purchase from a restaurant with poor sanitary conditions. This can be revealed when [23] stated that, certain level of service may be more important to

some customers but not to all customers. Therefore, customers who may not attach importance to certain conditions in restaurants will make re-peat purchase. The review the literature revealed that, majority of authors based their findings on customer satisfaction and their retention. However, this study tries to find how customer perception also impacts retention.

2.2. Relationship between Satisfaction and Customer Retention

Customer satisfaction is a business philosophy which tends to relate to the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs [24]. Customer satisfaction is the extent to which customers perceive that their needs are being met by the firm's services [4].

Customer satisfaction has become one of the most critical marketing priorities because it is generally assumed to be a significant determinant of repeat sales, positive word-of-mouth, and customer loyalty [20]. In marketing concept, it is believed that reaching to organizational objects depends on definition and determination of needs and wants of target markets and fulfilling customer's satisfaction in a more appropriate and more effective way than competitors [25].

Customer needs and expectation is constantly increasing as standards of living and quality is ever-changing. If restaurants want to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction, they could periodically track staff performance. This will ensure that they meet the ever-changing needs of customers [26]. Quality is the most important element that triggers satisfaction in any service or product. To this, [13] revealed that quality has a direct influence on customer satisfaction which leads a customer towards loyalty. This confirms the finding of [17], that "customer satisfaction" was a strong predictor of customer loyalty intentions in their study. Again, [17] stated that, numerous studies have found out that customer satisfaction and customer retention leads to improved profits, positive word-of-mouth, and lower marketing expenditures. This means that when customers are retained any expenditure made by the restaurant will yield positive results leading to increased profits.

Literature provides three general parts of the restaurant experience as the greatest potential determiners of customer satisfaction [27]. These general categories are food (taste and quality), physical environment (décor/atmosphere), and service quality. In the study of [28], taste was the highest attribute that determined customer satisfaction in choosing a restaurant followed by cleanliness. Customer satisfaction, which translates into the more practical consideration of whether or not customers will return to a company or recommend it to others, is essential to the success of business [29].

Researchers have also found a strong relationship between satisfaction and loyalty or behavioural intentions [20] [26]. According to [10] customers are more connected and knowledgeable than ever before. The statement above suggests that, the savvy nature of customers will need more efforts from service providers in order to meet their demands.

Providing high quality services and improving customer satisfaction are widely recognized as fundamental factors boosting the performances [24]. They also observed that in order to achieve customer satisfaction, it is important to recognize and to anticipate customers' needs and to be able to satisfy them. According to Pantelidis (2010) as cited by [15], the top three factors explaining customer satisfaction are food quality, service, and atmosphere.

Food quality is perhaps the most important of all the components in a full-service restaurant in terms of satisfying customers [15]. Customer satisfaction is often used by managers to predict repeat patronage, which leads to brand loyalty and new customers [30]. A large body of literature reports on relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, and purchase behaviour [31]. It is believed that customers should be satisfied with sanitation in a restaurant premises to promote loyalty. To this, [24] opined that unsatisfied customer may represent a danger for the enterprise. The danger of an unsatisfied customer lies in the power of word-of-mouth. This means the un-satisfied customer may not make a repeat patronage and may also influence yet-to-visit customers to change their minds to visit the premises.

3. Methodology

In order to obtain facts concerning this topic, descriptive research design has been adopted. According to [32], descriptive study seeks to gather information so that description of what is going on can be made. They again stated that it may be designed to discover whether there is any relationship between two variables. The purpose of descriptive research is to observe, describe and document aspects of phenomenon as it naturally occurs [33].

3.1. Study Location

This study was conducted in Tamale, the capital of the northern region of Ghana. It was conducted in the central business area as well as the surrounding suburbs.

3.2. Population of the Study

The targeted population on which this study has been conducted included the middle class restaurants within the Tamale Metropolis. There are over two hundred (500) table service food providers within the metropolis. These include restaurants and other food service providers. Respondents for this study comprise of managers, food servers, waiters and customers in these restaurants.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

Food service providers in Tamale Metropolis are dotted around the suburbs of Tamale and the central business district of the town. The sample size for the study is as follows: thirty (30) premises were selected for the study while twenty (20) customers were selected from each premise for the study, the number of the

customers was expected to sum up to six hundred (600) customers. In order to get a fair sample for the study, the multi-stage sampling method was employed. According to [32], this is a variation of the cluster sampling technique where samples are selected in stages. This was done by zoning the town into 12 clusters. These clusters were selected randomly using the lottery sampling method where names of the suburbs were written on pieces of paper folded, mixed and picked one after the other up to eight clusters (first stage). Restaurants were also selected using the purposive random sampling technique for restaurants that were noted to be middle class restaurants (second stage). The convenience sampling was adapted to select customers (third stage). The convenience sampling was used for the selection of customers because; it is not all the time that there may be customers in these premises. For this reason, customers were selected based on the number in the premises at a time and as and when they come into the premises.

3.4. Instruments for Data Collection

To obtain the data and assess it, the researcher designed a close ended questionnaire for the customers of restaurants. The close ended questionnaire was used because they were more convenient for the participants to answer and for the researcher to interpret the respondent's results. The questionnaire sought to get the responses of the participants on areas such as personal hygiene of food employees; cleanliness of dining areas, food service areas, the overall area within the premises as well as the surroundings. The questionnaire their demographic information, the experience of the customer on some sanitation variables in relation to the restaurant in which they were interviewed and other restaurants visited in the past. Some were likert-type questions which were aimed at finding out how important variables such as dining area cleanliness, employee hygiene, outside environment, food service area and food contact surfaces were in determining their return intentions. All these variables were to be rated on a scale from 'important' to 'not important'. Another group of likert-type items were to determine whether customers were satisfied with the variables mentioned above or not. The scale on which they were also measured included 'satisfactory' to 'not satisfactory' and they were assigned values of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

3.5. Pretesting of Instrument

For the validity of the instrument the researcher employed content validity evidence. This was to ensure the representativeness and relevance of tasks or items on the instrument.

The drafted sample of the questionnaires for customers was given to my head of department as well as other two colleagues at E. P. College of Education, Bimbilla for review. Comments and suggestions were made especially. Corrections were effected on the items identified and additions made to ensure item fall in line with the objectives of the study. Reliability of the instrument was achieved in this study by a pilot test.

Twenty-five (25) samples of the customers' questionnaire were administered in the selected restaurants to test the reliability of the instruments. However, the Test-Retest-Reliability was used. The reliability was established through the co-efficient alpha. This was to assess the consistency of the questionnaire designed. The outcome of the instrument yielded a total reliability of 0.67.

3.6. Data Collection Procedures

In order to obtain an accurate data that will aid the achievement of the objectives of this study, structured questionnaire was being administered to the respondents. Face-to-face interview was used to administer the questionnaire for the study. The use of the face-to-face interview came as a result of the fact that some of the customers may be wayfarers that may make them difficult to be traced to collect the questionnaire.

Customers were approached for interview session when they were waiting for their orders or when they had finished eating and at certain times when they were in the process of eating. The questions were at times read out for respondents to choose the options and at times when they were in hurry to leave they read and choose the options themselves.

3.7. Methods of Data Analysis

The research design partially being descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data. This employed the use of Frequency, percentages, to analyze the responses given by the various respondents regarding the impact of hygiene of food servers, hygiene of waiters, unclean serving area, unclean outside environment, customer perception of restaurant cleanliness and many other variables and the way they influence or relate to customer retention or repurchase intentions. The impact of sanitation on customer retention and other facts were revealed by analysing and interpreting the scores for each of the variables of sanitation. The analysis of the above data was made possible by the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows Programme version 20 to draft tables with frequencies and percentages.

Finally mean ranking for the likert-questions that were to measure customer satisfaction and perceptions was made possible by summing up the accumulated percentages for each of the variables.

4. Results

Research Question One: Will customer perception on sanitation and hygiene practices bring about their retention?

4.1. Customer Perception and Retention

In this section, the discussion is made on the perception of customers on sanitation and hygiene in the restaurant. The variables in this section are based on are dining area cleanliness, employee hygiene, outside environment cleanliness and

food contact surface cleanliness. These variables were ranked on how important each of them can affect customer retention on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the less significant and 5 a very high significant value.

Regarding customer perception on sanitation and retention, the study in **Table 1** revealed that, majority of the customers (98.2%) perceived dining area cleanliness to be an important factor that can influence their retention in the restaurants they eat. An insignificant percentage (0.7%) of the customers did not perceive dining area cleanliness as an important factor that can influence their retention while 1.1% of the customers stayed neutral. Among the variables under this section, an average ranking of 4.86 was recorded for dining areas cleanliness which makes it an important factor that can influence positively on their retention. This implies that dining area cleanliness is a determinant in customer retention. This finding confirms the study of [34] that, cleanliness of a restaurant, including the dining area is an integral part of a customer's dining experience and ultimately, their loyalty to a food service establishment. To this, [17] stated that a causal relationship exists between service quality and satisfaction, and that perceptions of service quality affect feelings of satisfaction which, in turn, influence future purchase behaviour. Dining area is one of the customers' points of contact; its cleanliness is therefore an important factor in determining customer retention and must be maintained.

Also, 97.6% of the customers perceive employee hygiene as an important factor that can influence their return intention. Less than one percent (0.9%) of the customers did not perceive employee hygiene as an important factor that can influence their return intention while 1.7% stayed neutral. An average ranking of 4.73 was attained for perception on employee hygiene and that it can influence positively on their retention. This outcome suggests that perception on employee hygiene also has a greater influence on customer intention to return to a restaurant and it confirms the findings of [16] that, "the greater the perception of service quality, the greater the intention to return and to recommend". Customer

Table 1. Percentage distribution of customer perceptions about sanitation variables.

	Dining area Cleanliness	Employee Hygiene	Outside Environment Cleanliness	Food contact surface
	%	%	%	%
Not Important	-	-	-	-
Fairly not important	0.7	0.9	0.6	0.6
Neutral	1.1	1.7	2.8	0.6
fairly Important	9.8	20.6	21.2	5.0
Much Important	88.4	76.8	75.5	93.9
Total	100	100	100	100
Rank	4.86	4.73	4.71	4.92

perceptions of service are subject to the characteristics of service providers [15]. Characteristics of employees have a greater impact on customer perception about a restaurant. This also confirms the statement of [18] that, perception of restaurant service quality directly influences the perception on restaurant image. This therefore suggests that poor employee hygiene lead to poor restaurant image, customer turnover and reduced profitability. From the table, it can also be realised that 96.7% of the customers perceive outside environment of the restaurant to be an important factor that can influence their return intention. An insignificant percentage of 0.6% did not perceive outside environment of the restaurant to be an important factor that can influence their return intention while 2.7% stayed neutral. The findings had an average ranking of 4.7 on the perception about the outside environment of the restaurants and that it can influence positively on their return intention. This is a clear cut proof that outside environment of the restaurant has an influence on customers' return intentions. This outcome conforms to the study of [20] that, "perceived quality of physical environment was an important factor affecting customer satisfaction and retention". The study of [35] states of how customers perceive physical environments and how perception directly influences customer emotions and indirectly affects their behavioural intentions.

A good percentage (98.9%) of customers also perceived food contact surface as an important factor that can affect their return intention, 0.5% did not perceive food contact surface as an important factor that can influence their return intention while 0.6% stayed neutral. This variable was however ranked the highest (4.92) on the scale of 1 to 5 in terms of customers' perceptions as an important factor that can influence their retention. Per this study, customers' perception about food contact surface cleanliness was the highly ranked variable that can influence customer retention followed by dining area cleanliness and employee hygiene and outside environment respectively. The outcome of the finding in this study is an indication that customers perceive all the sanitation variables to be important in selecting a place to dine and therefore positive perception leads to positive outcome.

Research question two: Will customer satisfaction about sanitation in food joints bring about their retention?

4.2. Customer Satisfaction on Sanitation Variables in Restaurants

Customer's satisfaction plays a major role in the retention of customers in various food ventures. It is the satisfaction that appeals to other customers who originally were not visiting a particular food venture to patronize food. **Table 2** presents customer satisfaction concerning the sanitation variables. These variables were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 ranging from not satisfactory, not satisfactory, neutral, satisfactory and much satisfactory.

Dining area cleanliness is one of the most important sanitary issues that people consider when patronizing food at any food joint. The dining area gives more freshness to the surrounding and makes clients feel comfortable when

Table 2. Percentage distribution of customer satisfaction on sanitation variables.

	Dining area cleanliness	Employee Hygiene	Outside environment cleanliness	Food contact surface
	%	%	%	%
Not Important	2.0	0.6	1.7	0.6
Fairly not important	7.4	13.4	7.9	3.7
Neutral	7.0	7.7	5.5	3.7
fairly Important	31.3	41.6	40.5	20.6
Much Important	52.3	36.6	44.5	71.5
Total	100	100	100	100
Rank	4.24	4.00	4.00	4.92

eating. From **Table 2**, it is indicative that majority (83.6%) of customers were satisfied with the dining area cleanliness leading to positive return intention, 9.4% of the customers were not satisfied with the level of cleanliness of the restaurants leading to negative return intention while 7% stayed neutral.

The variable (dining area cleanliness) had a significant average ranking of 4.24. This means that dining area sanitation is of great influence to customer retention. This therefore suggest that majority of the customers would be retained in terms of patronage since they were satisfied with the dining area sanitation. This outcome confirms the finding of [17] that, customer satisfaction in dining area was the predictor of retention in their study. Again, the statement of [20] also add that “customer satisfaction in dining area is a determinant of repeat patronage, positive word of mouth and customer loyalty”. In addition, the study of [4] found out that customer satisfaction mediates between perceived service quality and financial performance. Also, [34] maintained that, cleanliness of a restaurant, including the dining area is an integral part of a customer’s dining experience and ultimately, their loyalty to a food service establishment. These therefore are confirmation in this study that customer satisfaction on sanitation in the dining area is of a greater impact on retention.

The data also indicated that 77.2% of the customers were satisfied with the level of sanitation on employee personal hygiene within the restaurants, while 14% of the customers were not satisfied with the employee personal hygiene. However, 7.7% stayed neutral. This had a significant average ranking of 4.0 on the scale of 1 to 5. This is therefore a sign of retention since majority were satisfied with the employee hygiene. Customers therefore confirmed their commitment to stay loyal to the restaurants since they found no serious sanitation defects in the employees that can influence them negatively. This finding confirms the statement of [36] that, restaurants with low food server hygiene factor leads to customer dissatisfaction and higher customer turnover. The consequence of improper sanitation is severe and includes loss of sales, reduced profits, damaged product acceptability, loss of trust and consumer confidence as well as ad-

verse publicity [2]. Based on the above findings restaurateurs should pay attention to employee hygiene to ensure customer retention. To buttress the above statement, the statement of [20] had it that, for restaurant owners to satisfy customers, they should pay attention to the operation of the physical environment such as professional appearance of employees.

Respondents' level of satisfaction on outside environment cleanliness was also sought. Eighty-five percent (85%) of customers indicated that they were satisfied with the level of cleanliness of the outside environment of the restaurants; nearly ten percent (9.6%) of them were not satisfied with the level of cleanliness of the outside environment of the food joint they while 5.5% remained neutral concerning this variable. The outside environment of restaurants therefore had a significant average ranking of 4.18 on the scale from 1 to 5. This therefore greatly made customer form positive opinions about the restaurants leading to their retention. To this scenario, [34] found out that customers are forming an opinion on the surroundings the minute they walk into an establishment. This opinion could be positive or negative depending on the sanitation level of the environment.

With reference to the table, about ninety-two percent (92.1%) of the customers indicated that they were satisfied with the level of cleanliness of food contact surface in food joints and that showed their commitment to remain loyal to the restaurants, 4.3% of the customers were not satisfied with the level of cleanliness of the food contact surface in the food joints. Almost four percent (3.7%) of the respondents also stayed neutral. The food contact surfaces variable had an average ranking of 4.9 on the scale of 1 to 5 which is an indication that customers hold high to this variable and it had a great influence on their return intentions in the restaurants. In a whole, customers placed much importance to all the variables under this category and that showed that there is a high retention rate since retention rate is highly associated to satisfaction.

4.3. How Sanitation Variables Can Influence the Return Intention of Customers

Table 3 presents a data on sanitation variables and how they can influence customers' return intention. On the question on how the level of ventilation can affect respondents return intention in a restaurant, the study reveals that 47.9% of the customers feel that poor level of ventilation can to a greater extent affect their return intention in restaurant, 42.5% of the customers feel that poor level of ventilation can somehow affect their return intention into the restaurant while 9.6% of the customers feel that poor ventilation cannot at all affect their return intention to a restaurant. The results from this imply that ventilation is an important factor in terms of customers' comfort and therefore their retention since majority of the respondents stated that its bad state can affect their return. This finding falls in line with the findings of [27], the nature of the atmosphere in the dining area of the restaurant has a greater influence on customer satisfaction and retention. Also, [15] stated that, Pantelidis (2010) found atmosphere as one of

Table 3. Influence of poor ventilation, poor enclosure, poor lighting, poor cleaned tables, on customers' return intentions.

	To a greater extent	Somehow	Not at all	Total
	%	%	%	%
Poor Ventilation	47.9	42.5	9.6	100
Poor Enclosure	33.5	37.8	28.7	100
Poor Lighting	36.1	46.8	17.1	100
Poorly Cleaned Tables and Chairs	68.0	30.3	1.7	100
Poor Spacing of Tables and Chairs	54.7	37.4	7.9	100
Inappropriate Temperature of	68.0	25.0	7.0	100
Use of hands to dish out food	53.2	37.9	8.8	100
Poor Food Display	62.4	32.6	5.0	100

the factors having great impact on customer satisfaction and retention. These are clear confirmations that the dining atmosphere or ambience has an impact on customer retention. Also, [35] referred to ambience as intangible background characteristics that tend to affect the non-visual senses and may have a subconscious effect on customers. All these findings indicated that ventilation or ambience in the restaurant is of a degree of impact on customer return intention.

The impact of enclosure of the premises was also sought into. Almost thirty-eight percent (37.8%) of the customers indicated that poorly enclosed premises can somehow influence negatively on their return intention in restaurant, 33.5% of the customers indicated that poorly enclosed premises can to a greater extent influence their return intention, while 28.7% of the customers' belief that poorly enclosed premises can not at all influence their return intention to restaurants. This finding indicates that enclosure of a restaurant is not a strong factor that can affect negatively on customers return.

Effect of poor lighting of the restaurant premises was also enquired on. The finding revealed 46.8% of the customers purporting that poor lighting and ambience can somehow influence their return intention. Thirty-six percent (36.1%) of the customers show that poor lighting and ambience can to a greater extent influence their return intention, while 17.1% of the customers' belief that poor lighting and ambience can not at all influence their return intention to restaurant. The result of this analysis suggests that lighting is not a factor that can seriously affect negatively on customers' return intentions. This is therefore different from [35] that lighting can be one of salient stimuli in the restaurants. For restaurant owners to satisfy customers, they should pay attention to the operation of the physical environment such as comfortable seats, high quality furniture, lighting and colour [20].

Table 3 again reveals that more than half of the customers (68.0%) indicated that poorly cleaned tables and chairs to a greater extent can affect negatively on their return intention to a restaurant, 30.3% of the customers' belief that poorly

cleaned tables and chairs can somehow affect their return intention to restaurants while 1.7% of the customers believe that poorly cleaned tables and chairs can not at all affect their return intention to a restaurant. This finding suggests that cleanliness of tables and chairs can seriously impact negatively on customers' return intention and therefore a condition food service manager should be mindful of. This coincided with the finding of [21] that cleaned Tables and chairs can play a significant role in improving customers' impression and thereby retaining them.

From **Table 3** it can again be observed that 68.0% of the customers indicated that cold temperature of food can to a greater extent affect their return intention, 25.0% of the customers indicated that the cold temperature of food can somehow influence their return intention to restaurants, while 7.0% of the customers indicated that cold temperature of food can not at all influence their return intention in a restaurant. This is an indication that temperature of food is a force to reckon with regarding customer return intention since majority indicated it can affect negatively on their return intentions.

Respondents were asked to state the influence of the use of hands to dish out food on their return intention. The data in **Table 3** revealed that 53.2% of the customers stated that the use of hands to dish out food can to a greater extent influence negatively on their return intention, 37.9% of the customers' belief that the use of hands to dish out food can somehow influence negatively on their return intention, while 8.8% of the customers believe that the use of hands to dish out food cannot influence negatively on their return intention at all. The finding in this study means that the use of hands in serving food may not be tolerated by many and therefore a decline in patronage. However, during the data collection session some customers explained that at certain times the use of hands cannot be avoided if local food such as fufu is served and therefore this phenomenon cannot influence negatively on their return intention.

On the question of poor display of food on return intention, 62.4% of the customers' belief that poor display of food can to greater extent influence negatively on their return intention to restaurants, 32.6% of the customers indicated that poor display of food can somehow influence negatively on their return intention, while 5.0% of the customers believe that poorly displayed food can not at all influence negatively on their return intention. This is an indication that the display of food for sale is very important in dealing with customers as majority of them will not tolerate poorly displayed food. In a whole all the sanitation variables are very important regarding customer return intention except enclosure of the restaurant premises and lighting which customers seem not to place much importance on.

5. Conclusion

Sanitation in restaurants is a major factor to guarantee customer retention which is very important for repeat patronage. The performance of employees in their schedules in the restaurant is a reflection of their capabilities and this can be

made possible through training in customer care services and food safety and hygiene issues.

Recommendations

The findings in this study suggest that the restaurateurs need to pay particular attention to all issues that have to do with the customer. As been mentioned by numerous authors that, the customer is the soul of the organisation and that without the customer the restaurant ceases to exist. The following should therefore be adhered to in order to keep customers coming.

1) Managers and employees need to do whatever they can to ensure satisfaction of customers regarding services rendered since customer satisfaction is one of the determinants of customer retention.

2) Managers and employees should also listen and act swiftly to address customer complaints and concerns. As mentioned by several writers that, unaddressed customer complaints can lead to negative word-of-mouth.

3) Since sanitation and hygiene are key factors in determining customer retention, managers need to ensure that all the tangibles in their restaurants are at an acceptable level in terms of cleanliness. These include cleanliness of the dining areas, food contact surfaces, outside environment, employee hygiene as well as ambience. All these when exclusively complied with will go a long way to instil confidence in customers in terms of the safety and quality of their dining experience.

4) The government and agencies that control the food and beverage industry should also enact laws that will ensure that all food handlers receive food safety training in order the safeguard the health of consumers.

5) Periodic or unannounced inspection visits should be carried out in restaurants to ensure that all food service providers comply with the laws governing the industry.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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