

Vended Food Service Quality and Tourist Destination Loyalty in South East Nigeria

¹*Ononogbo K. U. and ²Ukabuilu, E N.

¹Department of Tourism Management Technology
The Federal Polytechnic, Bida, Niger State.

Ononogbokingsleyugo@gmail.com

*Corresponding author:

²Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management,
Imo State University, Owerri

Abstract

The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between food service quality and tourist destination loyalty in South East Nigeria. Using convenience sampling technique, the study sampled 380 tourists from ten (10) tourist sites in Abia, Imo, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi states with the aid of structured questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed using the multiple linear regressions and the correlation analytical techniques to test the hypotheses at 0.05% level of significance. Findings showed that the multiple linear regression analysis on the hypotheses indicated p-values of less than 0.05 and so the null hypotheses were rejected. This implies that food service quality affects tourist patronage, satisfaction and image of South East Nigeria. It is recommended that authorities in South East Nigeria should encourage food vendors to access credit facilities in order to acquire food service materials and equipment for better service delivery. There should be government policy that supports regular training workshops for food vendors so as to increase their capacity to render acceptable services to customers and tourists at the destinations.

Key words: Food service quality, tourist destination, destination loyalty, tourist patronage, tourist destination.

Introduction

The quality of vended food service at a tourist destination goes a long way in attracting patronage and goodwill for the destination. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), product and service quality are highly connected with customer satisfaction and company profitability. Therefore, vended food and service quality usually lead to higher customer satisfaction. For instance, Awi and Chaipoopirutana (2014) contended that food and service quality that fulfill customer's expectation will lead to customer satisfaction and destination loyalty. Customer or tourist loyalty is a business strategy targeted at rendering services to satisfy the clients with the aim of retaining them. This implies that customer satisfaction must certainly precede customer loyalty. As Han and Hyun (2017) have argued, the quality of the physical environment, service, and food affects tourists' satisfaction and intention. At the destination, for example, business firms also strive to secure the loyalty of their customers. When the expectations of consumers or tourists are met, they become satisfied and naturally loyal to the business firm or destination. Wherever loyalty is mentioned, there is always a commitment to stay with

the object, good or service in question. When this happens, it leads to repeated visits which translate to increased profits. In congruence with this notion is the work of Yoo and Bai (2013) which stated that loyalty toward the destination is important due to the role that it plays in obtaining profitability and subsequent growth and development. This is the case because according to Gursoy, Chen and Chi (2014) and Sun, Chi and Xu (2013) loyalty is considered to be the best predictor of future behaviour and a source of competitive advantage and success in the marketplace.

Sustaining tourists' patronage of a destination requires strategic planning and execution that ensures that the destination remains viable and attractive in the eyes of tourists and intending tourists. According to the Nexford University (2023), food service is an integral component of the tourism and hospitality industry, and should aim at providing high quality food and service that can leave a lasting positive impression on guests, leading to repeat business and positive reviews. Aekarajindawat (2019) posited that there may be a greater economic impact on tourism if the improvement of food service is explored, with a view to understanding how this intersects with traveller satisfaction. Succinctly put, food service is an underlying factor in tourism development and greatly contributes to the national economy (Lertputtarak, 2012). Similarly, tourist loyalty is a function of the quality of food service obtainable at a given destination. In fact, Oliver (1999) defined customer loyalty as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product/service consistently, thereby causing repetitive same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.

Tourist loyalty is very important for the destination in the recent market environment. For the tourist destination, customers are the core assets and destinations can gain added value from tourists and visitors only if they pay sufficient attention to them (Rowley, 2005). From a traditional viewpoint, market share is the most important determinant of destination's profit. Implementing tourist loyalty strategies is helpful for destination's profit. It is claimed that 5% increase in tourist retention leads to an increase of profits by 25% to 95% (Sallberg, 2004). Similarly, Nykamp (2001) stated that tourists' loyalty strategy will enable destinations have tourists on their side and the key to success in destination growth and development. According to Ndubisi (2007), the bases of tourist loyalty are trust, commitment, communication and conflict handling. This means that tourists will find it difficult to be loyal to a destination if they failed to trust them due to the manner service is rendered. In the same vein, tourists' loyalty is usually guaranteed where the providers of food services are committed and honest at the destination. Communication and conflict handling describe the expected attributes of food service providers in showcasing humility, empathy and tact in food service delivery.

Vended Food Service Quality

There is no doubt that we are living in a dynamic competitive world and so destination managers are to ensure that tourists receive services that give them value for their money. Ndubisi (2004) aligns with this assertion and argued that more and more destinations are capitalizing on strong destination-tourist relationships to gain valuable information on how tourists can be treated the best and indirectly keeping them away from competitors. Nowadays, consumers are paying more serious attention to the manner in which they are served. There is no doubt that leisure guests are looking for a place or destination that can fulfill their desires for relaxation, comfort and security. For example, some studies have observed that tourists' interest and preferences for vended foods value in a destination can have a pivotal function in affecting destination choice and loyalty (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Robinson and Getz, 2016; Sharples and Hall, 2004).

Observations in many places in South East Nigeria have shown that several food vendors lack proper training for the trade following display of unprofessional conduct such as quarreling with customers and being easily offended. This attitude does not guarantee pleasurable and memorable tourist experience at the destination; hence, it is capable of truncating tourist destination patronage, satisfaction and destination image. This study seeks to close these gaps in order to guarantee sustainable tourism development in South East Nigeria.

The aim of this study is to assess the relationship between food service quality and tourist destination loyalty in selected tourist sites in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives are to examine the: (1) Extent to which food service quality affect tourist destination patronage, (2) Extent to which food service quality affect tourist destination satisfaction, and (3) Level of the influence of food service quality on tourist destination image. The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05% level of significance.

H0₁: Food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination patronage.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between food service quality and tourist destination satisfaction.

H0₃: Food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination image.

Literature Review

Destination Development

Abdullah, Ismail, Mohamed and Rostum (2020) observed that food and service quality are essential for destination development and tourist re-patronage. According to Sharma and Patterson (2006), service quality has to do with the relationship between food vendors and tourists and between

tourists and the services provided. Destination development is the systematic planning and improvement of particular areas to support the take-off of desirable destinations for visitors, with emphasis on providing excellent experiences, good infrastructure, and exceptional services that ensure continuous patronage (British Columbia, 2021). The dimensions or attributes of destination development may vary, depending on research settings and researcher's approaches (Boivin and Tanguay, 2019; Bonn, Cho, Lee and Kim, 2016; Cracolici and Nijkamp, 2009; Crouch, 2011; Enright and Newton, 2005; Formica and Uysal, 2006).

An important aspect of destination development is ensuring that people received amazing experiences from food they ate. This is crucial in promoting a place as an authentic destination. In the words of Freire and Gertner (2019), a positive destination brand image depends on a number of factors including good food consumed in the destination. The author discovered that consumers use both local cuisine and its availability to define and evaluate a destination's brand image. Destination development can be achieved through provision of quality local foods. In this regard, Henriksen and Halkier (2015) opined that destination development that is focused on food tourism largely depends on cooperation among interests in both public and private sectors. This shows that destination attributes in the eyes of the tourists are essential in attracting tourists to a place. In the perspective of Turner and Reisinger (1999), tourists choose a destination with attributes that the tourists find important. Assaf and Josiassen (2013) observed that previous research has shown the benefits of destination attributes in supporting the performance of tourism and influencing the formation of destination image

Food Service Quality, Food Hygiene and Tourist Destination Image

Ahmad (2015) showed that service quality and food quality have a positive influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty at a destination. Similarly, Kumar and Bhatnagar (2017) found that food service dimensions had strong impact on customer satisfaction. Mireille and Carole (2019) and Kala and Barthwal (2020), respectively found that service attributes had a significant and positive effect on the overall satisfaction at tourist destination, just as quality of food and service, ambience and physical attributes of restaurants significantly contribute to tourist satisfaction.

Service quality hinges on all aspects of the hospitality and tourism industry including but not limited to; design and layout, menu planning, purchasing, furnishing, production and processing, packaging and delivery (Anyanwu, 2018). Also, the concept of service quality depicts a form of attitude, and a long-term overall evaluation of products or services, performance of the products or services in relation to his or her expectations. Service quality in tourism is, today, regarded as an important impetus for economic growth (Jinsoo and EuiBeom, 2019). Among the factors related to tourism, service quality has received significant academic attention. According to Baltescu

Vended Food Service Quality

(2021), tourism destination development is a difficult process which requires positive evolutions among all the companies involved in meeting visitors' needs. Out of these companies, the food service units have a special role to play in satisfying the basic physiological needs of visitors and to offer a wide range of opportunities to spend a pleasant leisure time and to entertain. In the opinion of Kaura and Datta (2012) and Lenka et al. (2009), service quality dimensions always have positive impact on customer satisfaction and intention to revisit. Similarly, Kumar (2012) discovered positive relationship between service qualities and repurchase intention and willingness to recommend.

Food hygiene is especially important to all those that come into contact with food. It is an essential area of hygiene; others being environmental hygiene and personal hygiene. It implies all the processes and measures taken to ensure that food is not contaminated prior to the time of consumption. Odo and Onoh (2018) maintained that food hygiene is a conscious effort to keep food safe from potential contamination and protect the health of consumers. Food handlers, in this instance should be knowledgeable in the subject of food contamination, food poisoning and food borne illnesses in order to serve food that are safe and wholesome to the public. In support of the foregoing assertion, White (2006) and the FAO and WHO (2009) defined food hygiene as all the practical measures involved in keeping food safe and wholesome throughout all the stages of production to the point of sale or consumption. The implications of food hygiene compromises are better imagined than experienced. It can cause diseases and prevent one from attending to work and businesses due to hospitalization. For instance, food-borne and water-borne diarrheal diseases kill an estimated 2.1 million people annually, most of whom are children in developing countries (Fleury, Stratton, Tinga, Charon and Aramini, 2008). From the perspective of the FAO (2007), millions of people fall ill and many suffer from serious disorders, long-term complications or die as a result of eating unsafe food. Agyen (2012) reported that food-borne illness can cause social and economic burdens besides death.

These days, food safety and hygiene are one of the major concerns in the hospitality industry. It explains the steps that need to be adopted so that contamination of food does not happen prior to consumption. Prospective clients only see the beauty of the food that is prepared and presented, which may be eye-appealing, but what people tend to forget are the processes involved in cooking or preparing that particular dish (IPL, 2021). This includes the equipment which is used to prepare the food, the ingredients which are used, the way food is handled and stored. The procedures involved in storing food also play a crucial role in food hygiene. The personal hygiene maintained by the chefs who prepare the food is yet another part. Chefs should have knowledge about all the above if they are preparing food which is to be consumed by people. Food safety and hygiene can be different from grass root

level to higher levels. For instance, a dish can be hazardous for consumption if the ingredients are not stored in the right conditions i.e., the grass root level and it can also be hazardous for consumption if cross-contamination takes place which is at a higher level, which chefs sometime tend to overlook. Beerli and Martin (2004) and Chi, Qing and Qu (2008) identified cleanliness and tidiness of the environment including the service persons and the products they sell as important attributes of destination image. Indeed, food hygiene and destination cleanliness rank tops on the list of travel motivations. Today's tourists are exposed and reckon with destinations with good foods. Good food encompasses all foods that are wholesome for human consumption. Unwholesome or contaminated foods lead to illnesses that might adversely affect health, productivity and leisure activities. Report indicates that food-borne ailments appear to be a limitation to destination choice (MacLaurin, Loi and MacLaurin, 2000). Similarly, JHHI (2002) discovered that approximately 30 percent of tourists to Asia, Latin America and Africa suffered food-borne illnesses including diarrhea. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2000) posited that a poor food safety image of a country would negatively affect its tourism industry and reduce tourism revenue from overseas. In the opinion of Assaker (2014), destination image entails all the ideas, beliefs, and impressions individuals acquired about destination characteristics, including activities at a destination after analysing the information gathered. In another study, Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001) found that destination image correlates to perceived quality, satisfaction, and behaviour intention.

Furthermore, WHO (2015) indicated that every year as many as 600 million people in the world get sick of which 420,000 die after eating contaminated food. In the United States, food-borne illnesses affect an estimated 48 million people every year resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths (CDC, 2017). Africa and south-east Asia are believed to have the highest occurrences and death rates linked to food-borne disease. Grace (2015) also observed that the repeated occurrence of food-borne disease has led to an increase in global concern about food hygiene and safety among food handlers. Adane, Teka, Gismu, Halefom and Ademe (2018) therefore, contended that food-borne disease outbreaks are often linked with poor personal hygiene of people handling foodstuffs. These developments ultimately will adversely affect the image of these destinations and revisit intentions by tourists and visitors. For example, Sarunya (2012) observed that destination image and food image are the essences of tourists' destination selections. The provision of service providers to be reliable and responsive can enhance a destination's competitiveness as a marketing tool (Dwyer, 2003). According to Pendergast (2006), a poor-quality food service can impact negatively on health, disrupting trips, and tarnishing destination reputations. Similarly, Kim et al. (2011) found that food tourists' intention to revisit could be explained and predicted by the perceived value of food and satisfaction.

Method

Area of the study

The area of the study covered the tourists or visitors of vended foods in South East Nigeria. South East Nigeria is predominantly occupied by the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria. It has five states namely Imo, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi and Enugu. This region in Nigeria is famous for its industry (business) and education. For example, it is reported that the South East Nigeria has the highest access to quality education in Nigeria (Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa, 2018). Also, street food trade is a predominant business in the whole of the South East, with men and women hawking or stationary selling their cooked food items. These food vendors simply belong to the informal sector, not regulated but can be seen in virtually every place where people gather for business or leisure. The states of the South East were, therefore, chosen for this study because of: (i) their proximity to one another (ii) their homogenous culture and language (iii) their amazing food varieties.

Study population and Sample size

The population of this study is composed of the tourists at major tourist sites in the five states that make up the South East. Because of the nature of this study, the population was drawn from different tourist sites in the South East in order to reach out to visitors in these destinations. In doing this, the demographics of the population was also taken into consideration.

The tourists at notable tourism destinations in South East Nigeria formed the study participants. These destinations include Ezeagu Tourist Complex and Polo Amusement Park in Enugu State, as well as the Ogbunike Cave and Ogba Waterfalls in Anambra State. Others are the Nekede Zoo and the Oguta Lake (Imo State); the National War Museum, Umuahia and the National Gallery of Art, Umuahia (Abia State). In Ebonyi State, Golden Sand Beach Afikpo and the Abakiliki Golf Course were among the top tourist sites where participants in this study were drawn from.

A preliminary study was carried out to assess the value of p using the Cochran's (1977) method of estimating sample size as cited in Anyanwu (2018). The result gave a sample size of 384. A pilot survey was conducted to measure the research instrument for feasibility and efficiency. For the pilot study, the researchers sampled forty (40) respondents drawn from three (3) tourist sites in South East states of Abia, Anambra and Imo. The tourist sites were National War Museum (Abia State), Nekede zoo (Imo State) and Oba Waterfalls (Anambra State). The respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the way food vendors served in those destinations. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents agreed while 50% disagreed.

Data analysis

Three hypotheses were tested using the multiple linear regression and the Spearman's correlation statistical tools. The reason for choosing the statistical tools was because the study itself is relational and so was carried out to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Another reason is that these statistical tools are good measures of relationships (Nwanna, 1981; Osuala, 1993).

Questionnaire Distribution

A total of three hundred and eighty-four (384) copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents. Table 1 below indicates the number of completed copies of questionnaire, the number of uncompleted/invalid copies of questionnaire as well as the number of copies of questionnaire not retrieved.

Table 1 Questionnaire Distribution, Collection and Return Rate

Activities	Number	Percent
Not retrieved	3	0.78%
Uncompleted/invalid	1	0.26%
Completed	380	98.96%
Administered	384	100.00%

Source: Field Survey 2022.

The table 1 shows that 98.96% of the total copies of questionnaire administered were duly completed, while 0.26% of copies of the instrument collected were not completed. It equally indicates that 0.78% of the total questionnaires distributed were not retrieved. Thus, this study is based on the responses of three hundred and eighty (380) respondents who duly completed the instrument.

Result

In this part of the study, the multiple regressions were used to test hypotheses one, two and three.

Table 2: Multiple linear regression analysis for the effect of food service quality on tourist destination patronage

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-Statistic	Sig.
(Constant)	20.780	.803		25.862	0.000
Training in food handling	-.427	.293	-.117	1.459	0.001
Tourists' willingness to buy vended food	-.608	.307	-.156	-1.979	0.049
Reduction of tourists' self-esteem	.770	.220	.245	3.502	0.001
Total (average)	-0.088			0.021	
R-Square	0.053				
Adjusted R-Square	0.033				
Sig.	0.000				

Source: Field survey, 2022

In table 2, the R-square of the regression value is 0.053. This implies that 5.3% of the total variation observed in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. This shows that about 5.3% of the total variation observed in the dependent variable (food service quality), is explained by the independent variable (tourist destination patronage). This implies that food service quality has about 5.3% impact on tourist patronage at the destination.

The adjusted R-square represents the unbiased explained proportion of variation observed in the dependent variable by the independent variables. Thus, the unbiased proportion of the total variation observed in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables was 0.033. This means that food vendors' attitudes explained about 3.3% of the total variation observed in tourist destination patronage. In other words, food service quality exerts about 3.3% influence on tourist destination patronage. The analysis shows that the overall significance of the model is high and acceptable based on the sig. probability value of 0.000. This indicates that the influence of food service quality on tourist destination patronage is statistically significant.

H₀₁: Food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination patronage

Table 2 indicates that the coefficient (B) of food service quality is -0.088, meaning that there is a negative relationship between food service quality and tourist destination patronage. This implies that a decrease in food service quality will lead to about -0.088 decreases in tourist patronage at the destination. The t-statistic value of 0.021 and sig. probability value of 0.000 indicate that at 5% level of significance, the dependent and independent

variables are statistically significant since the probability value was less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination patronage, is rejected.

Table 3: Multiple linear regression analysis for the effect of food service quality on tourist destination satisfaction

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-Statistic	Sig.
(Constant)	13.914	1.184		11.747	0.000
Tourists' happiness from vendors' courtesy	.325	.247	.086	1.315	0.003
Vendors' presentation of food	.617	.218	.172	2.834	0.005
Cost of vended food	.569	.170	.185	3.352	0.001
Total (average)	0.503			2.500	
R-Square	0.074				
Adjusted R-Square	0.059				
Sig.	0.003				

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 3 shows that the R-square of the regression value is 0.074. This implies that the total variation observed in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. This shows that about 7.4% of the total variation observed in the dependent variable (food service quality), is explained by the independent variable (tourist destination satisfaction). This means that food service quality has about 7.4% impact on tourist destination satisfaction at the destinations. The adjusted R-square represents the unbiased explained proportion of variation observed in the dependent variable by the independent variables. Thus, the unbiased proportion of the total variation observed in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables was 0.074. This means that food service quality explained about 7.4% of the total variation observed in tourist destination satisfaction. In other words, food service quality exerts about 7.4% influence on tourist destination satisfaction. The analysis shows that the overall significance of the model is high and acceptable based on the sig. probability value of 0.000. This indicates that the influence of food service quality on tourist destination satisfaction is statistically significant.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between food service quality and tourist destination satisfaction

Table 3 indicates that the coefficient (B) of food service quality is 0.503, meaning that there is a positive relationship between food service quality and tourist destination satisfaction. This implies that an increase in food service quality will lead to about 0.503 increase in tourist satisfaction at the destination. The t-statistic value of 2.500 and sig. probability value of 0.003

Vended Food Service Quality

indicate that at 5% level of significance, the dependent and independent variables are statistically significant since the probability value was less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination patronage, is rejected.

Table 4: Multiple linear regression analysis for the effect of food service quality on tourist destination image

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-Statistic	Sig.
(Constant)	12.91	.947		13.630	0.000
Food vendors' touching food with bare hands	1.150	.162	.417	7.088	0.000
Tourists' feeling of security buying vended food	-.590	.229	-.146	-2.569	0.011
Food vendors' neat presentation of themselves	.524	.212	.146	2.473	0.014
Vended food sales in dirty environment	.964	.184	.294	5.230	0.000
Tourists' perception of cooking in dirty places	.621	.194	.197	3.197	0.002
Competence of food vendors	-.403	.181	.122	-2.232	0.026
Tourists' recommendation of vended foods	.721	.168	.230	4.285	0.000
Total (average)	0.426			2.496	
R-Square	0.216				
Adjusted R-Square	0.199				
Sig.	0.000				

Source: Field survey, 2022

In table 4, the R-square of the regression value is 0.216. This indicated that the total variation observed in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. This implies that about 2.16% of the total variation observed in the dependent variable (food service quality) is explained by the independent variable (tourist destination image). This indicates that food service quality has about 2.16% impact on tourist destination image. The adjusted R-square represents the unbiased explained proportion of variation observed in the dependent variable by the independent variables. So, the unbiased proportion of the total variation observed in the dependent variable explained about by the independent variables was 0.216. This means that food service quality explained about 2.16% of the total variation observed in tourist destination image. This, therefore, suggests that food service quality exerts about 2.16% influence on tourist destination image. This follows that the overall significance of the

model is high and acceptable in view of the sig. probability value of 0.000. This shows that the influence of food service quality on tourist destination image is statistically significant.

H₀₃: Food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination image.

Table 4 shows that the coefficient (B) of food service quality is 0.426, meaning that there is a positive relationship between food service quality and tourist destination image. This suggests that an increase in food service quality will lead to about 0.426 increases in tourist destination image. The t-statistic value of 2.496 and sig. probability value of 0.000 indicate that at 5% level of significance, the dependent and independent variables are statistically significant since the probability value was less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination image is rejected.

Figure 1 is the emerged model depicting the different coefficient values of the interrelationships between the variables studied.

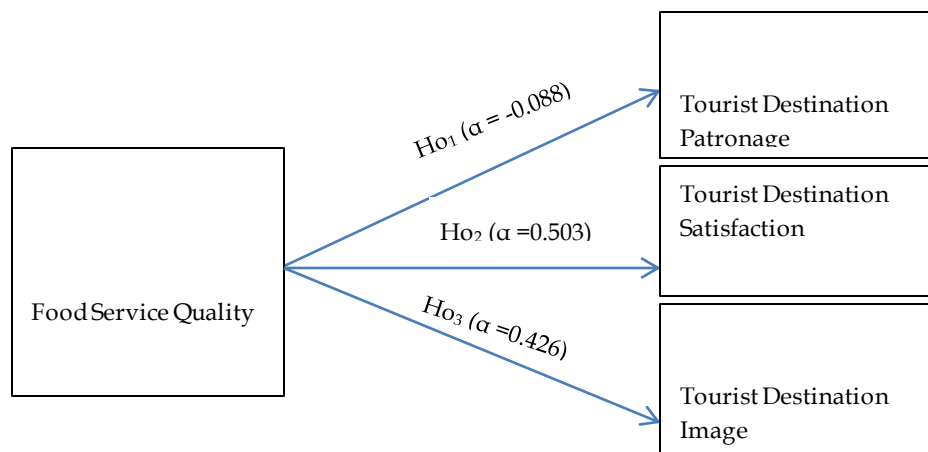


Figure 1: Emerged Operational Model

Discussion

In Table 2, the parameters that made significant impact in the analysis are training in food handling (0.001), tourists' willingness to buy vended food (0.049) and reduction of tourists' self-esteem (0.001). Since the sig. value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination patronage, is rejected. This shows that food service quality is important in sustaining patronage of tourist destination products and services. Abdullah, Ismail, Mohamed and Rostum (2020) observed that food and service quality are essential for destination development and tourist re-patronage. According to Sharma and Patterson (2006), the role of service quality has to do with the

Vended Food Service Quality

relationship between food vendors and tourists and between tourists and the services provided. In fact, service quality unambiguously defines the service quality output (Sharma and Patterson, 2006). In any destination, tourist satisfaction through food service quality always leads to patronage and loyalty to that destination. Food service quality is one of the most important considerations of quality perceived by tourists who want to visit a destination. As Han and Hyun (2017) have argued, the quality of the physical environment, service, and food affects tourists' satisfaction and intention. In Table 3, the parameters that made significant impact are tourists' happiness from vendors' courtesy, vendors' presentation of food and cost of vended food with sig. values of 0.003, 0.005 and 0.001, respectively. Since the value of each of the parameters is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between food service quality and tourist destination satisfaction is rejected. This implies that food service quality has significant relationship with tourist destination satisfaction in South East, Nigeria. This means that food service quality attributes such as orderliness in providing service, courtesy and respect for customers significantly affected destination satisfaction attributes such as obtaining pleasure from the way food vendors served and the appearance and taste of vended foods. For example, Ahmad's (2015) study on service quality and food quality revealed that service quality and food quality have a positive influence on customer satisfaction at the destination. In the same vein, Kumar and Bhatnagar (2017) discovered that food service dimensions had strong impact on customer satisfaction. In different studies, Mireille and Carole (2019) and Kala and Barthwal (2020), respectively found that service attributes had a significant and positive effect on the overall satisfaction at tourist destination just as quality of food and service, ambience and physical attributes of the restaurant significantly contribute to tourist satisfaction. The parameters that made significant impact in the analysis in Table 4, are the constant, food vendors' touching food with bare hands and tourists' feeling of insecurity buying vended food with significant values of 0.000, 0.000 and 0.011, respectively. Others are food vendors' neat presentation of themselves with significant value of 0.014. While vended food sales in dirty environment have significant value of 0.000, tourists' perception of cooking in dirty environment has significant value of 0.002. The significant value of competence of food vendors is 0.020 while tourists' recommendation of vended foods goes with the significant value of 0.000. Since the p-value for the parameters are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that food service quality has no significant relationship with tourist destination image is rejected. This result suggests that food service quality has significant relationship with tourist destination image. Thus, food service qualities such as orderliness in providing service, commitment to service, smartness in rendering service, respect for customers during service, tactfulness in service delivery and covering food during service have significant relationship with tourist destination image. The kind of food service given to the tourist or

visitor has something to do with the way the tourist perceives the destination. Destination marketing can be achieved through the provision of excellent food service at the destination. In fact, Sarunya (2012) observed that destination image and food image are the essences of tourists' destination selections. The expectations and acceptable standards for food and service quality provided by restaurant staff are an important factor of concern. The provision of service providers that are reliable and responsive can enhance a destination's competitiveness as a marketing tool (Dwyer, 2003). In Pendergast's (2006) view, a poor-quality food service failure can impact negatively on health, disrupting trips, and tarnishing destination reputations. Similarly, Kim et al. (2011) found that food tourists' intention to revisit could be explained and predicted by the perceived value of food and satisfaction.

Conclusion

The quality and service of food are important measures used to assess the development of a tourist destination. For this reason, destinations are striving competitively to provide excellent food service to their customers. The study has revealed that food service quality is essential in projecting the destination in good light, attracting goodwill, tourists' patronage, satisfaction, and retention as well as enhancing development. For instance, the multiple linear regression results showed that food service quality does have significant relationship with tourist destination patronage, satisfaction and image. The correlation results also indicated a positive/significant relationship with tourist destination satisfaction and image. This, therefore, illustrates the saying that 'destinations with penchant for quality food and service will always continue to be popular and listed among desirable tourist destinations. It is, therefore, recommended that: one, the NAFDAC should redouble their efforts at monitoring and supervising the activities of food vendors in Nigeria, and two, Government should encourage food vendors by providing them with soft loans to acquire service materials and equipment for better service delivery

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Vended Food Service Quality

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