

# Restaurants' Food Hygiene Practices: Assessing Customers Satisfaction

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**Abstract:** *When people spend their money on meals away from home, they expect to have a good quality food with an acceptable level of hygiene, which eliminates food borne illness. Previous studies revealed that cases of food poisoning are found everywhere in the world and many of them were found to be stemmed from restaurant organizations, causing great damages to the health of hospitality consumers, hence, affect customer satisfaction. In Nigeria past studies found poor level of awareness and compliance with hygiene regulations among hospitality operations in the country. It was therefore pertinent to find out the effects of poor food hygiene compliance on customer satisfaction. However, past studies noted cleanliness has an influence on customer satisfaction. These studies were conducted in Asia, America and Europe. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the influence of food hygiene practices on customer satisfaction in restaurant of registered hotels in Kano state, Nigeria, so as to provide a platform for better understanding of the two constructs in African setting and help policy makers to make policies that would ensure compliance with hygiene laws and regulations by restaurants operations. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design approach using semi-structured Likert Scale type questionnaire to collect data and targeted (80) restaurants of registered hotels in Kano State and 384 restaurants' customers. Proportional stratified and simple random samplings were used to select eight (8) restaurants of registered hotels. Fisher formula of sample size was used to sample 252 customers from eight (8) restaurants of registered hotels in Kano which constituted the sampling frame. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze quantitative data. It was found that, unlike "There is absence of the taste of detergent or soapy material in the dish or food ordered in this restaurant," which the customers disagreed with (mean score 2.7917, SD1.635), the customers were satisfied with all other parameters set to measure the influence of food hygiene on customers satisfaction in the restaurants of registered hotels in Kano. It was therefore recommended that restaurants of registered hotels in Kano should handle food and service equipment correctly so as to prevent contamination. This can be achieved through the incorporation of food hygiene practices throughout the food service process, with an emphasis on wash-up (utensils) in order to avoid food and chemical residue on the service equipment that may contaminate the food, resulting in food poisoning, customer complaints, customer dissatisfaction, and huge legal costs in the event the restaurants are sued.*

**Keywords:** Food Hygiene, customers' satisfaction, Restaurant, illness and Awareness

## I. INTRODUCTION

Customer Satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or happiness as a result of consumption of a product or service (Oliver, R. L., 1980; Kandampully, J., Mok, C. & Sparks, B., 2008). According to Negi (2002) 'Hygiene' refers to the general 'cleanliness' of the environment, food and people in the work situation to preserve health. While 'food hygiene' refers to all measures necessary to ensure the safety of the food on offer to the customers in the restaurant (Foskett and Ceserani, 2012; Negi, 2002). Restaurant operations have an obligation to the consumers primarily to safeguard them against the dangers to their health which might arise through carelessness or ignorance in the storage, preparation and service of food (Negi 2002).

Researchers noted that 'hygiene' is one of the most crucial subjects for all hospitality employees to study, comprehend, and practice in their daily operations (Foskett & Ceserani, 2012). Previous research revealed that cleaning is one of the

most critical aspects of customers' perceptions of service quality, particularly in the hospitality industry (Becker, Murrmann, & Cheung, 1999; Barber & Scarcelli, 2009; Jang & Liu, 2009; as cited by Ah, 2012).

Unfortunately, many hospitality operations, more specifically in developing and underdeveloped countries do not pay great attention to hygiene (Center for Science in the Public Interest, CSPI, 2008). This is evident considering the global cases of food poisoning, which cause great damage to the health of hospitality consumers. Food poisoning, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) (2014), is a preventable public health problem. It is caused by consuming contaminated food and causes 48 million infections, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths in the United States each year.

In Australia, the New South Wales (NSW) Food Authority (2016) reported a food poisoning outbreak stemmed from dining at Box Village Bakery. The report of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014) estimates that 2 million and 750,000 cases of food poisoning occur annually in the United Kingdom and France, respectively. An estimate made by Alberta Health Services (2009) shows 4.25 million Canadians are ill from food poisoning annually.

There are scarce statistical figures for food poisoning outbreaks in African countries. The World Health Organization (2008) raised grave concern over the majority of African countries' lack of reporting of food poisoning incidents, stating that the lack of documentation leads to a false sense of security, limiting vigilance, and allowing for poor hygiene and sanitation standards to develop. These subsequently create dangers to the health of consumers and food handlers, which ultimately affect customer satisfaction. The World Health Organization (2018) emphasized that in Africa, unsafe drinking water and a lack of hygiene remain important causes of death, with an estimation of 870,000 associated food poisoning deaths occurring in 2016.

In Kenya, the most recent incident of food poisoning occurred after a bride-price negotiation ceremony in Ruirii village, Nyeri County, where ten (10) victims were admitted to different hospitals and four people, including the groom's mother, died as a result of eating contaminated food (Wanjiru Aidah, 2020). In recognition of the importance of food safety, the Kenya National Government established the Kenya Health Policy Plan 2014–2030, with the goals of licensing and controlling prepared food in open areas, promoting healthy sanitary conditions to prevent food contamination, and forming multi-collaborative efforts for food service regulation (Ministry of Health, Republic of Kenya, 2014; as cited in Arias-Granada Yurani, Neuhofe Zachary T., Bauchet Jonathan, Ebner Paul, and Ricker-Gilbert Jacob, 2021). This initiative, if fully implemented, will promote good hygiene practices in the food industry in the country, eliminate or reduce cases of food poisoning, reduce customer complaints, and promote customer satisfaction.

However, more than 30 Senegalese were hospitalized in 2016 after eating rotten mayonnaise and liver sold in the eateries. Another outbreak was associated with the consumption of contaminated fish. In Senegal, the prevalence of food poisoning is common, but unfortunately not always recognized officially unless a large group is involved (Leral Net, 2016; Demoncheaux *et al.*, 2012; cited in Arias-Granada *et al.*, 2021). In South Africa, despite the growing economy, food poisoning outbreaks are imminent. An outbreak associated with *Salmonella* has been reported in the North West and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in 2016 and 2018, respectively (Herriman 2018; Motladiile *et al.* 2019; Chutel 2018; WHO 2018; as cited in Arias-Granada *et al.*, 2021).

Nigeria, like many impoverished countries, lacks an official foodborne disease surveillance system. However, there have been reports of food poisoning that has resulted in hospitalization and death. For example, in Ibadan, a food poisoning outbreak claimed the lives of 20 people after *Salmonella typhimurium*, the causal bacterium, was isolated from a sandwich filling. Outbreaks stemmed from restaurants in Kano and Kwara States that led to the hospitalization of over 12 families (Onyeneho & Hedberg, 2013). The findings of the studies conducted in Bauchi on the bacterial qualities of ice creams, salads, bean dumplings, and cereals sold in public places show high concentrations of *staphylococcus aureus*, *Shigella sp.*, *E. coli*, *salmonella sp.*, and *Bacillus sp.* (Abdulsallam, 2009; Ningi, 2009; Yakubu, 2009; as cited in Adebitan 2011). The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) (2008) reported that more than half of all cases of food poisoning were contracted from eating food away from home; the reason given was the inability of hotel and catering organizations to adhere to hygiene practices.

Other studies conducted in Nigeria found poor awareness and compliance with hygiene regulations among hospitality operations in the country (Adebitan, 2011; Onyeneho & Hedberg, 2013; Bamidele, Adebimpe, Oladele, & Adeoye, 2015). These lead to food poisoning outbreaks, customers' complaints, and customers' dissatisfaction (SGS Inspection Services Nigeria Limited, 2015). Customers' dissatisfaction is a threat to restaurant operations, since a dissatisfied

customer can switch to competitors and can share with his family and friends the horrible experience he had with the operation, leading to low customer patronage, which directly affects the profit margin of the restaurant establishment (Oliver, M.O., 2020; SGS Inspection Services Nigeria Limited, 2015).

According to Kotler, Amstrong, and Oliver (2020), the cost of acquiring new customers is more than twice the cost of sustaining an existing one. Presbury (2005) conducted research that demonstrated the impact of customer happiness on a company's financial success. The result revealed that nearly 98 percent of dissatisfied customers would switch to a competitor without complaining. A major increase in customer complaints initiated a review, identifying that over 75% of complaints originated from poor hygiene practices. Therefore, restaurant operations must direct their efforts towards providing effective hygiene services with a view to satisfying their customers and retaining their loyalty for efficient profitability.

According to Kandampully, Mok, and Sparks (2008), customer satisfaction occurs when a products or service's performance meets or exceeds a customer's expectations for the quality of the offering. Scholars noted that if a customer rates the quality of a product or service highly, he or she might derive high satisfaction from the product or service (Oh, 2000; Oliver, R. L., 1980). Other scholars have noted that hygiene practices in the tourism and hospitality industries are a critical determinant of the quality of service assessed by customers (Becker, Murrmann, Murrmann, & Cheung, 1999; Barber & Scarcelli, 2009; Jang & Liu, 2009; as cited by Ah, 2012).

In Nigeria, improper hygiene practices in catering organizations lead to food poisoning outbreaks, customer dissatisfaction, and customer complaints. This results in a lack of patronage for most catering facilities, hence putting them in danger (SGS Inspection Services Nigeria Limited, 2015). It was reported that over twenty (20) restaurants in Kano State lost about eighty percent (80%) of their daily patronage (Kano State Hoteliers Association, 2021). This was attributed to rises of restaurant hygiene-related complaints (Kano state Consumer Protection Council ,2022). Studies have shown that consumers complaints and unhappiness are closely related(Rajput Amer and Gahfoor R. Zohaib, 2020; Rao, S. P. & Charan, P. S., 2013). Therefore, if a guest complains the hygiene of the food served to him is poor, that translate he/she is unsatisfied with the provision of food hygiene in the restaurant and can switch to competitors, as well, tell associates that the restaurant's hygiene is bad, resulting to loss of existing and potential patronage by the restaurant.

Furthermore, with increased competition, it is necessary for restaurant operations to understand their environments and provide food hygiene services that will satisfy their customers and increase their ability to retain their loyalty (Hudson, 2008; Massawe, 2013; Stevens, P., Knutson, B., & Patton, M., 1995; Radojevic, Stanistic, & Stanic, 2015; Walter & Edvardsson, 2010). Hudson (2008) emphasized that knowing how to satisfy and keep customers is the single most important business skill that anyone in the hospitality industry should embrace.

Therefore, it was necessary to explore the food hygiene factors that hospitality customers patronizing restaurants of registered hotels in Kano State, Nigeria, perceive to be key to their satisfaction. In the hope that the findings would provide a platform for better understanding of the two constructs in African setting, help restaurant managers in Kano hotels know their environment and make food hygiene policies that would facilitate customer satisfaction, prevent loss of patronage and ensure customer safety on their facilities.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To determine the food hygiene factors that influence customer satisfaction in restaurants of registered hotels in Kano state, Nigeria

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design approach using semi-structured Likert scale-type questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section 'A' covered the demographic variables of the respondents, and section 'B' was used to collect data on the influence of restaurant's food hygiene practices on customers satisfaction. The study targeted (80) restaurants of registered hotels in Kano State and 384 restaurant customers. Proportional Stratified and simple random samplings were used to select eight (8) restaurants of registered hotels(Mugenda and Mugenda, 2012). Fisher formula of sample size was used to sample 252 customers from eight (8)

restaurants of registered hotels which constituted the sampling frame. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyzed data. However, the results of the analysis are found below:

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Demographic Findings

The demographic statistics indicated that out of 252 customers filled the questionnaires, 190 respondents (75%) were male customers and 62 (25%) of the customers were female. This ratio suggests that more males patronized the restaurants at the period of the survey, although, this ratio may not lead to the conclusion that there were more male customers patronizing restaurants at registered hotels than female customers.

It was also found that 112 respondents, representing 44% of the customer were business customers, 105 (42%) were leisure and 35 (14%) of them were government official. The result shows that more business customers patronized the restaurants of the registered hotel; a probable explanation could be Kano is the largest commercial center in the northern part of Nigeria, and as such, business customers are commonly found visiting hospitality organizations in the state to meet their demands.

It was discovered that 11 customers, or 4% of the respondents, were international customers. While 241 customers, representing 96% of the respondents, were domestic customers. This implied that very few international customers patronized the restaurants of registered hotels in Kano. This could be as a result of insecurity challenges in the country. Most of the customers were between 20 and 30 years of age, with a valid response of 97, representing 38%. 89 customers, representing 35% aged between 31 and 40 years old, 53 customers (21%) were 41–50 years old. Only 13 customers, comprising 6%, were between the ages of 51 and above. These findings show that more youth patronized the restaurants of registered hotels in Kano. As more business customers patronized the restaurants in Kano, more youth patronage could be a result of the aged businessmen in Northern Nigeria traditionally introducing their children to take over their businesses at a young age to ensure the survival and continuity of the businesses.

A total of 107 customers, representing 42% of the total, patronized the restaurants daily. The second most popular choice of patronage was weekly, of which 93 respondents (37%) patronized the restaurants weekly. The third category received 39 responses, which indicated 15% of customers patronized the restaurants once a month, with only 13 customers, representing 6% of the respondents, patronizing the restaurants once a year. The results show that the majority (over 80%) of the customers patronized the restaurants daily and weekly. This implied that the restaurants of registered hotels in Kano have many loyal customers. The loyalty could be the result of satisfactory services offered to the customers or a market monopoly.

#### Findings on the Influence of Food Hygiene Practices on Customer Satisfaction

To establish the influence of food hygiene practices on customers' satisfaction in restaurants of registered hotels in Kano State, Nigeria, 11 tenets of food hygiene practices were put on a Likert scale of 5–1, where 5 = strongly agreed, 4 = agreed, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagreed, and 1 = strongly disagreed. As illustrated in Table 1.0, descriptive analysis was performed to calculate the mean and standard deviation for each tenet.

Table 1.0: Influence of Food hygiene attributes on customers' satisfaction

S/No	Food Hygiene Practices Attributes	N	Mean	Std Deviation
1	Employees do not touch food with bare hand in this restaurant	252	4.0076	1.13698
2	Knives, spoon, forks, tongs and other foodservice tools are held by the handle in this restaurant	252	4.3068	.89813
3	Dishes/plates are held by the bottom or edge in this restaurant	252	3.7576	1.33181
4	Glasses are held by the middle, bottom, or stem in this restaurant.	252	3.8106	1.46769
5	Clean cloth or tissue is used to wipe glasses, plates, cutleries, and other food service equipment in this restaurant.	252	3.9583	1.11427
6	Cloth for cleaning food spills is not used to wipe plates, cutleries and glasses in this restaurant	252	3.7159	1.58137
7	Food is served at right temperature in this restaurant	252	4.4545	.91762

8	Food is properly cooked in this restaurant	252	3.9848	1.34523
9	I do not observe/feel any foreign particles like stick, sand, flies and hairs in the dish ordered	252	4.6061	.73228
10	There is absence of the taste of detergent or soapy material in the dish / food ordered in this restaurant	252	2.7917	1.63556
11	I have never experienced any stomach upset associated with eating meal from this restaurant	252	4.5076	.97103
<b>Overall satisfactions with food hygiene</b>			<b>3.9838</b>	<b>1.2259</b>

### Discussion of findings

The results of the descriptive analysis of the implication of food hygiene on customers' satisfaction revealed that ten (10) of the eleven (11) tenets investigated generated mean scores in the range of 4 and a high standard deviation statistic, indicating a minimal variation in the respondents' answers.

The results from Table 1.0 indicated that on item one, customers agreed that "employees do not touch food with their bare hands in this restaurant," with a mean score of 4.0076 (SD 1.1369). This implies that employees are aware of the danger of spreading microorganisms. On item 2, the respondents surveyed agreed that "knives, spoons, forks, tongs, and other foodservice tools are held by the handle in this restaurant," with a mean score of 4.3068 (SD.898). On item three, respondents agreed that "dishes/plates are held by the bottom or edge in this restaurant," with a mean score of 3.7576 (SD 1.331). On item four, respondents agreed that "Glasses are held by the middle, bottom, or stem in this restaurant," with a mean score of 3.8106 (SD 1.467). On item five, respondents also agreed that "Clean cloth or tissue is used to wipe glasses, plates, cutlery, and other food service equipment in this restaurant," with a mean score of 3.9583 (SD 1.114). On item six, respondents admitted that "cloth for cleaning food spills is not used to wipe plates, cutlery, and glasses in this restaurant," resulting in a mean score of 3.7159 (SD 1.587).

However, this study discovered that respondents strongly agreed with item seven, "Food is served at the right temperature in this restaurant," with a mean score of 4.4545 (SD.917), and in item eight, "Food is properly cooked in this restaurant," with a mean score of 3.9848 (SD 1.345). On item 9, customers strongly agreed that "They do not observe or feel any foreign particles like sticks, sand, flies, or hairs in the dish ordered," with a mean score of 4.6061 (SD.732). However, on item ten, the customers disagreed with the statement that "There is an absence of the taste of detergent or soapy material in the dish or food ordered in this restaurant," with a mean score of 2.7917 (SD 1.635). Interestingly, the most important finding of this study is on item eleven, when customers were asked whether they experienced stomach upset associated with eating meals in the restaurant, almost all the respondents strongly agreed that "I have never experienced any stomach upset associated with eating meals from this restaurant," a mean score of 4.5076 (SD.971).

### IV. CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the survey findings, it can be concluded that, unlike "There is absence of the taste of detergent or soapy material in the dish or food ordered in this restaurant," which the customers disagreed with (mean score 2.7917, SD1.635), the customers were satisfied with all other parameters set to measure the influence of food hygiene on customers satisfaction in the restaurants of registered hotels in Kano. This implied that the majority of customers in restaurants of registered hotels were not satisfied with the dishes ordered because of the taste of detergent or soapy materials in them. This could cause a serious health challenge relating to food poisoning, resulting to serious damage to the health of the customer and to the restaurant image which directly affects the restaurants level of patronage and profitability.

The survey findings agree with the work of Adebitan (2011), which assessed the level of compliance with hygiene regulations by hotels in Nigeria. The result shows that there is poor awareness and adherence to hygiene and sanitation regulatory requirements among hospitality operators in Nigeria. It also agreed with the study by Bamidele *et al.* (2015),

who assessed hygiene practices among 235 workers in Nigerian eateries. The result reveals that only 10% of the workers had formal hygiene training.

The finding is in disagreement with Negi (2002), who suggested that restaurant operations have an obligation to the consumers primarily to safeguard them against the dangers to their health that might arise through carelessness or ignorance in the storage, preparation, and service of food. Sienny and Serli (2010) emphasized that when individuals spend money on meals away from home, they expect high-quality food with an adequate degree of cleanliness to reduce food-borne diseases. Food poisoning outbreaks are a threat to restaurant operations since it is clear that the National Restaurant Association (2011) estimates about 75,000 USD as the average cost of a food poisoning outbreak, lawsuits ranged from 150,000 to 5 million USD, and in addition to the spread of negative word-of-mouth to family and friends of dissatisfied customers, which is difficult for restaurant operations to control.

However, it should be noted that customer satisfaction is the outcome of a combination of many elements that contribute to the satisfaction of consumers that visit the restaurant. Other factors like price, ambiance, employee personality, and courtesy are all factors that need to be considered. This study, on the other hand, may serve as a guide for restaurants of registered hotels in determining what food hygiene factors clients require in order to patronize their establishments.

#### **V. RECOMMENDATION**

The study recommends that restaurants of registered hotels in Kano should handle food and service equipment correctly so as to prevent contamination. This can be achieved through the incorporation of food hygiene practices throughout the food service process, with an emphasis on wash-up (utensils) in order to avoid food and chemical residue on the service equipment that may contaminate the food, resulting in food poisoning, customer dissatisfaction, customer complaints, and huge legal costs in the event the restaurants are sued.

The study also recommends that, as a matter of urgency, restaurants of registered hotels in Kano state should liaise with the Health Ministry, agencies, and departments in the state to have access to hygiene rules and regulations so as to be able to design and come up with a comprehensive food hygiene policy to guide their operations for better compliance with hygiene practices, which will facilitate better customer satisfaction, prevent cases of food poisoning, and prevent loss of customers in the restaurants of registered hotels in Kano state.

Restaurants of registered hotels in Kano should encourage and sponsor employees to attend a formal food hygiene training and also design an informal (on-the-job or off-the-job) food hygiene training for all employees to attend with a view to enhancing their understanding and knowledge of food hygiene for effective practices, which will in turn promote customer satisfaction and loyalty, reduce or eliminate customer complaints, and prevent cases of food poisoning at their facility.

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