

# Hospitality Versatility Around the Globe A Case Study on Cuisine and Culture in Hospitality Industry in South Korea

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to find out the influence of cultural factors on food choices by hospitality clientele in independent commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County in Kenya. Data was collected from nine independent commercial catering outlets licensed by the Tourism Regulatory Authority, Western Kenya. The collected data include demographic information, cultural factors; traditions, taboos, beliefs and rituals. Linear regression was used to explore the relationship between the moderating effect of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors and food choices. The results of the study indicated that the majority of respondents indicated that food choices are determined by cultural factors; traditions, taboos, beliefs and rituals respectively. Consequently, the study results show that environmental factors have a moderating influence on the food choices by hospitality clientele. Due to financial and time constraints, this study does not capture all the dependent commercial catering outlets as well as both dependent and independent commercial catering outlets licensed by the county government of Kisumu, thus the findings may be applied with caution outside the scope of this study. Based on the results of the study, hospitality professionals should factor in the cultural element during menu planning to strike a balance between the catering policy, the financial policy as well as the marketing policy. The research addresses the critical topic of cultural factors determining food choices, which seems to be evolving with time, hence complicating food and beverage business across the world.*

**Keywords:** Cuisine, Culture, Food

## I. INTRODUCTION

Food and culture are two different worlds that go very well together. When one grows up in a distinctive culture, it's bound to influence his/her lifestyle, including adopted traditions, taboos, rituals, belief system-and perhaps most enjoyable, his/her food choice (Lamb 2015). This means cultural factors remain fundamental in our daily food choice and consumption across the world, and thus it is true to say that hospitality clientele's food choice has been, and will remain to be as a result of the cultural determinants. Nonetheless, Lillicrap & Cousins (2010) confirms that modern day food choices are as a result of a number of factors, including culture, and thus food choice diversity. Cardan (2015) asserts that Food choices among the global hospitality clientele are diverse, including ethnic cuisines, fusion cuisines and contemporary cuisines, with a variety of factors determining these choices (Davies, Lockwood, Pantelichi & Alcott, 2008).

Nevertheless, in spite of this broad classification of cuisines, the menu, and especially the Kenyan menu, has particularly focused on exotic national cuisines such as the French cuisine, Italian cuisine, German cuisine, Mexican cuisine, Indian cuisine etc (Jee Hye Lee, 2014) in an effort to increase and/ or maintain profitability. On a global perspective, Carlson & Frazao (2012) argues that although the most popular ethnic cuisines continues to be Italian, Chinese and Mexican, some of the global ethnic restaurants gaining ground in recent years include Thai, Ethiopian and Indian. This is suggestive that some of the previously dominant global ethnic food choices are diminishing, just like the Kenyan ethnic foods, which is already extinct. And thus today, cultural proliferation, Mcdonaldization and Americanization (Cardan, 2015) has colonized not only the Kenyan but also the global Food and Beverage sector. This has been with the assumption that these cuisines are widely acceptable across the global hospitality market segment



(Cardan, 2015), unlike the pure ethnic Kenyan cuisines. Thus it is common to find foods such as French fries, chicken ala' king, spaghetti carbonara, hollandaise sauce, sweet and sour sauce, chef's salad with French dressing etc. on the menu within the Kenyan catering outlets. Moreover, the Kenyan hospitality training institutions have put more emphasis on culinary skills that incline towards the worlds' cuisines, with very little, and sometimes no focus on the pure ethnic culinary skills within their programs (Carlson et al., 2012). The resultant graduates, who form the key industry players both locally and internationally (Cardan, 2015), end up with vast knowledge on national cuisines from other countries and continents at the expense of their local Kenyan ethnic cuisines. The same has extended to the hospitality's world of academics, with publications of menus and recipes favoring [1], which comprises an inter-mix of the world ingredients, hence producing world global cuisines (Wales, 2009) such as contemporary as well as fusion cuisines. In view of the various food choices, Sims (2012) reiterates that the global hospitality industry has over-emphasized fusion and contemporary foods at the expense of pure ethnic cuisines, with Kenya being no exception. This has also been catalyzed by exposure of the current global hospitality clientele, as many are well traveled (Wessel & Brien, 2010), and emigration is largely experienced across the world, thus breaking the Ethnic cuisines traditional borders. Consequently, the coexistence of several ethnic groups, with their fading cultural characteristics (Elbert, 2011), has given rise to a variety of labels such as cultural diversity, cultural heterogeneity, multiculturalism and polyethnicity. All these has contributed to acculturation, assimilation, diffusion as well as adaptation (Stuart, 2008), which has significantly led to the total demise of ethnic food, as the same has greatly disrupted the original cultural factors that determine food choices. In combination, these forces against Kenyan ethnic food choices has given birth to loss of authenticity of the ethnic menu, hence being overtaken and/ or replaced by fusion and contemporary foods (Jee Hye Lee, 2014), with the view of satisfying the current hospitality clientele's needs and preferences. Kenyan ethnic cuisines therefore not only have lost demand and profitability across the world (Stuart, 2008), but also recognition, which has brought about corresponding extinction. Thus in contrast with the expectations, the ethnic menu is unable to meet the specific objectives of the marketing policy, the catering policy as well as the financial policy (Lillicrap et al, 2010), due to the dwindling attractiveness of the cultural market segment.

## **II. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A cross-sectional survey design, concerned with examining variation across cases (Henn, Weinstein & Ford, 2009), as well as a descriptive correlation research survey, which allows the researcher to describe and evaluate the relationship between the study variables by asking questions to the respondents and examining their relationships were adopted. Eric, Alan, Shankar & Christine (2008) asserts that cross-sectional research survey involves using different groups of people who differ in the variable of interest, which formed the dependent variable of the study (Food choice) but share other characteristics such as socioeconomic status, educational background, and ethnicity, which in this case formed the independent variable of the study. Consequently, descriptive correlation research design was instrumental in examining cultural variations of the hospitality clientele in the multi- ethnic, cosmopolitan Kisumu County, and was therefore chosen for its appropriateness in fact finding to yield accurate information (Kothari, 2010). Factors under investigation were cultural factors determining food choices as independent variables (IV), environmental factors as moderating variables (MV), while food choices formed the dependent variable (DV).

[2], the principle port city of Western Kenya in Kisumu County, the immediate former capital of Nyanza province, covering 2,085.9KM<sup>2</sup> with a population of 968,879 (2009 census) (Kisumu County, 2013), formed the area of study. Kisumu Country's neighbors are: Siaya County to the West, Vihiga County to the North, Nandi County to the North East, and Kericho County to the East. Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya, the second most important after Kampala in the greater Lake Victoria basin, characterized with pronounced cultural and ethnic diversity among the residents, on the forefront in eco-cultural tourism, a multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan, leading commercial trading, industrial administration and communication Center in the lake basin region (Helen, Stephen, [3], a key market as well as the gateway to the landlocked countries of East Africa. Thus Kisumu city was chosen because of its dense and ever swelling population at a growth rate of 2.1%, comprising of multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan inhabitants (Helen et al, 2015), hence with a pronounced cultural and ethnic diversity, and specifically on food choices among the residents.

The target population of the study constituted independent commercial catering food outlets with a specific focus on hospitality clientele, as well as managerial and/or supervisory staff within the independent commercial catering outlets



in Kisumu County. For purposes of this study, nine (9) independent commercial catering outlets, licensed by the Tourism Regulatory Authority, Western Kenya, were chosen. Purposive sampling was adopted, mainly for the selection of commercial catering outlets from the study population of all the licensed catering outlets, systematic random sampling was used in the distribution of respondents among the nine independent commercial catering outlets, and thereafter simple random sampling was employed for the selection of respondents from each of the selected independent commercial catering outlets, with a sample size of 384 respondents.

Data was collected by use of two research instruments; a self administered questionnaire, a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts with the aim of gathering information from respondents (Kothari, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire comprised both closed-ended as well as open ended questions (Henn et al, 2009), aiming at investigating food choices among hospitality clientele in Kisumu County. This allowed the respondents greater freedom of expression, in relation to the cultural factors determining food choices under investigation. The questionnaire comprised of seven sections, with the first section addressing demographic factors of the respondents, the second section investigated traditions (IV), the third section was on taboos (IV), the fourth was on beliefs (IV), the fifth on rituals (IV), the sixth section investigated food choices (DV), and finally the seventh was to establish the moderating effect of environmental factors (MV) on the relationship between cultural factors influence on food choices, thus addressed the study objective.

Consequently, the study employed open-ended one-to-one interviews in which individual respondents were questioned about a particular issue, experience or event (Henn et al, 2009). Qualitative semi- structured/ unstructured interviews were conducted with the researcher’s intention to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individual respondents, (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008.), hence allowing generation of qualitative data. In every independent commercial Catering outlet, there was one supervisory staff to which interviews were carried out.

Quantitative data collected from respondents was coded, fed into spreadsheets, and thereafter analyzed using SPSS version 20. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics during data analysis. Open ended questions were qualitatively analyzed using the basis of the frequency of the responses, while numerical scores were awarded to closed ended questions. Descriptive statistics employed the use of frequencies and percentages, and for inferential statistics, regression was applied to determine the direction and find out whether there is influence of cultural factors on the relationship between hospitality clientele and food choices in independent commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County. Furthermore, chi square,t hypotheses as well ANOVA and t-test.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data was coded and analyzed on the basis of demographic factors as well as cultural factors determining food choices. Consequently, the moderating effect of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors influence on food choices was established as discussed below;

3.1 Demographic Factors

The researcher obtained information about the personal data of respondents. The data was related to gender, marital status, age and monthly income. These factors are generally important in food choices by hospitality clientele, and thus relevant in this study. In order to obtain the data, a coded language was entered in a spreadsheet then the qualitative data was converted to quantitative data which could be understood by the researcher. The results were as presented below Out of the 375 respondents, the results indicate that 243 respondents (64.8%)were married, 121 respondents (32.3%) were single and 11 respondents (2.9%) were neither married nor single as shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Respondents Marital Status

Table with 4 columns: Variable, Frequency, Percent, Cumulative Percent. Rows include Married (243, 64.8, 64.8) and Single (121, 32.3, 97.1).

Others	11	2.9	100.0
Total	375	100.0	

### 3.2 Age of Respondents

The results obtained on the respondents' age were as shown in table 3.2. Among the respondents, the age groups 20 – 39 years comprised of 214 respondents (57.1%), 40 years and above were 92 respondents (24.5 %), while 05 – 19 years were 69 respondents (18.4%).

**Table 3.2:** Respondents Age

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
05-19 Yrs.	69	18.4	18.4
20-39 Yrs.	214	57.1	75.5
>40	92	24.5	100.0
Total	375	100.0	

### 3.3 Respondents Gender

The researcher also sought to find out the composition of respondents in terms of gender. The results were as shown in table 3.3. From the results in table 3.3 above, the respondents comprised of 217 (57.9%) male respondents and 158 (42.1%) female respondents

**Table 3.3:** Respondents Gender

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	217	57.9	57.9
Female	158	42.1	100
Total	375	100.0	

### 3.4 Monthly Income of Respondents

Monthly Income of the respondents was investigated and the results were shown in table 3.4 below. From table 3.4, the results show that 166 respondents (44.3%) are earning between Ksh.30, 000 – Ksh. 49,000, 107 respondents (28.5%) are earning Ksh. 50,000 and above, and 102 respondents (27.2%) are earning Ksh. 29,000 and below.

**Table 3.4:** Respondents Monthly Income

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ksh.29,000 And Below	102	27.2	27.2
Ksh.30,000-Ksh.49,000	166	44.3	71.5
Ksh.50,000 And Above	107	28.5	100.0
Total	375	100.0	

### 3.5 The Role of Culture on Food Choices by Hospitality Clientele

The study sought to establish the relationship between cultural factors and food choices among the independent commercial catering hospitality clientele within Kisumu County. These factors included traditions, taboos, beliefs, and rituals. Data was analyzed and the results discussed below;

### 3.6 Traditions of Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the various factors under traditions determine their food choices; a likert scale was used to assess the responses regarding the extent to which traditions influence food choices of the hospitality clientele, and the responses were analyzed and presented in table 3.5. From the results, nutritional requirements was ranked the highest with 21.9% of respondents who indicated that it determines food choices to a very



large extent, 12.5% of respondents indicated religious dietary requirements determine food choices to a very large extent, and 12% indicated that nature of the food item determines food choices to a very large extent. On the other extreme, 39.9% of respondents indicated that food composition determines food choices to no extent at all, 33.3% of respondents indicated that cultural dietary rules determine food choices to no extent at all, and 12.5% indicated that ethnic identity and religious dietary requirements determine food choice to no extent at all. From the results obtained, it shows that over eighty percent of food choices are made on the basis of traditions.

In reference to the response from supervisory staff, the majority of respondents were found to prefer food items prepared and served in their native ways. (Gill, et al, 2008.), for example “Nyuka”, “aliya”, “rech” among others in Taj Superfood, Green garden restaurant, Tilapia beach, the Bistro restaurant and Splash Food service. Consequently, the majority of the respondents indicated that traditions are a key factor in their food choices, and thus they were found to prefer food items prepared and served in the native traditional way.

In comparison to a similar research carried out in America, (Kamunyika, 2014), the study is in agreement with the findings that dietary choices of people of various ethnic groups continue to be influenced by traditional food practices and/ or religious customs.

### **3.7 Taboos of Respondents**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree, in relation to the variables under taboos determining their food choices. Using a Likert scale, the results were presented in table 3.6. The results show that 53.6% of the respondents agree that cultural dietary rules and regulations determine food choice, 52.8% agree that religious dietary restrictions determine food choice and 41.6 % agree that positive cultural attitude towards the food item determines food choice.

However, 24% of the respondents disagree that acceptable personnel in handling and service of food items determine food choice, 20.3% disagree that stage of growth and development determine food choice, and 21.9% disagree that acceptable ingredients in preparation and service of food item determine food choice. Thus from the results, the study shows that over sixty percent of respondents agree that taboos determine food choices, hence certain prohibitions on food choices play a big role in determining food choices among hospitality clientele as argued out by Reisch (2013), and thus in agreement with the results of this study.

Responses from supervisory staff indicate that some respondents do not consume goat meat and fish among the Luo and Luhya communities. However, majority of the responses from Haandi Restaurant indicated that respondents do not consume beef; while on the other hand, some responses from Taj superfood, Green Garden Restaurant, Splash food service, and Mahfudh Restaurant indicated it was not allowed culturally for children to consume eggs, women are prohibited from consuming gizzards and Muslims were only allowed to consume “halal” food. This is in agreement with what is argued out by Guide to Modern meals, second Canadian Edition (1982) that food superstitions and taboos, which forbid eating certain foods because of cultural traditions, are common in many cultures across the world.

### **3.8 Beliefs of Respondents**

Respondents were asked to select the most important and the least important factors that determine their food choices. The frequencies of the results are as presented in table 3.7. The results show that 59.7% of the respondents indicated that customary beliefs associated with the food item is the most important factor that influences food choices, 55.7% indicated that beliefs on food preparation, cooking and service is the most important factor, and 55.2% indicated that beliefs on food content is the most important factor.

On the other hand, 61.6% of the respondents indicated that psychological beliefs is the least important factor, 58.4% indicated that perception is the least important factor, and 54.4% indicated that religious beliefs is the least important factor. Thus the results show that fifty percent of respondents indicated that beliefs form the least important factor that determines food choices. Notwithstanding, scientific beliefs are becoming more pronounced on the basis of consuming fruits and vegetables of all kinds which has been associated with a reduced risk of many lifestyle related health conditions (Heiner, 2012), and thus this might have contributed on the responses which indicated that beliefs is the most important factor in their food choices by the other fifty percent.

All the same, responses from the majority of the supervisory staff show that a minority of respondents indicated that beliefs is a key factor in their food choices, against the majority with a contrary opinion. In relation to the Pan-European survey of consumer attitudes to food choice in 15 European member states, 74% of respondents attributed their food choice on beliefs (Glanz & Mullis, 2013). This may be as a result of global differences in beliefs as a determinant of food choice.

**Rituals of Respondents**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether “Yes” or “NO” rituals influence their food choices. The results were presented as shown in table 3.8. From the table, the results depict 261 respondents, with an observed proportion of 0.70 making their food choices on the basis of special religious practices and 214 respondents with an observed proportion of 0.56 making their food choices on the basis of connecting with god(s). On the other hand, 331 respondents, with an observed proportion of 0.88 do not make their food choices on the basis of values, and 165 respondents, with an observed proportion of 0.57 do not make food choices on the basis of occasion. Averagely, the study shows that fifty-five percent of respondents indicated that rituals do not determine their food choices.

Consequently the responses from supervisory staff show that the majority of the sampled respondents indicated that food rituals are not a key factor in their food choices. However, a few responses from respondents’ highlighted that food regulations differ from one Christian denomination to another. Example quoted was the ritual of consuming unleavened bread and wine (Mathew 26: 17-30), in addition to special religious functions which are always practiced by religious groups, especially on Friday during lent, thus avoidance of meat and dairy products. This could suggest that the rituals that might be observed by the respondents (45%) may be on the basis of religion. Thus Mohsen (2011) asserts that Christianity is the most practiced religion in the region and Kenya at large, and thus confirming the influence of religion, and specifically Christianity on food choices.

In comparison to a study carried out by Kathleen Vohs (2013), and published in psychological science, which revealed that small rituals carried out by consumers before consuming food or drinks can alter flavor perception, with the team behind the study suggesting that while many rituals may seem small or mundane, the effects they produce are quite tangible. This might be in agreement with this study as the results show a minority of respondents makes food choices on the basis of rituals, which should not be assumed.

**Hypotheses Testing**

The study sought to determine the relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County. In order for the researcher to obtain information on the main objective of the study, items on the questionnaire were scored according to the way they were answered by the respondents. And thus to investigate the relationship between cultural factors determining food choices and the food choices the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested;

There is no Significant Relationship between Cultural Factors and Food Choices among Hospitality Clientele.

A Chi-square test was used to find out whether there is any significant difference in the relationship between cultural factors and food choices. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05% level of significance and the results were presented as shown in table 3.9. From the analysis, at a 5% significance level, the results show that the p-values for the four factors (traditions, taboos, beliefs and rituals) that formed the IV are; 0.356, 0.876, 0.199 and 0.661 respectively. Thus  $p > 0.05$  and hence the study failed to reject the null hypothesis and concludes that at 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in commercial catering outlets within Kisumu city in Kisumu County.

**Table:** Relationship between cultural factors and food choices

Variable	$\chi^2$ -value	Df	p-value
Tradition	28.042	26	0.356
Taboos	12.187	18	0.876
Beliefs	12.254	9	0.199
Rituals	2.407	4	0.661



There is no Significant Influence of Environmental Factors on the Relationship between Cultural Factors and Food Choices by Hospitality Clientele.

Regression analysis was used to find out whether there is significant influence of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors and food choices among the hospitality clientele in independent commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05% level of significance and the results were presented in table 3.10. The model summary provides the correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>) for the regression model. The coefficient of 0.071 suggests there is a weak positive influence of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors and food choices.

**Table 3.10: Regression Model Summary**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.767	2	.383	.951	.387 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	149.990	372	.403		
	Total	150.757	374			
a. Dependent Variable: Food choices						
b. Predictors: (Constant), environmental factors, cultural factors						

**Table 3.11. ANOVA**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.024	.317		3.228	.001
	Cultural	.003	.004	.031	.594	.553
	Environmental	.018	.015	.061	1.173	.241

**Table 3.12: Regression Analysis**

A. Dependent Variable: Food choices

The ANOVA shows whether the regression model explains a statistically significant proportion of the variance. Specifically it uses a ratio to compare how well the linear regression model predicts the outcome to how accurate simply using the mean of the outcome data as an estimate is. From the analysis, the model predicts the outcome, and thus given the weakness of the correlation the model is not statistically significant ( $p=.387 > 0.05$ ).

The Regression Analysis table gives the values for the regression line. In the cultural factors row and environmental factors in the (B) column provides the gradient of the regression line which is the regression coefficient (B). This means that for every cultural factor, the model predicts an increase of

0.003 on food choice and for every environmental factor; the model predicts an increase of

0.018 on food choice. To test whether the model is statistically significant, the t-test is used. From the analysis, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that at 95% confidence level, there is no significant influence of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study, the majority of the respondents indicated that there is a relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in independent commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County. This therefore shows that food choices are determined by the cultural factors; traditions, taboos, beliefs and rituals respectively. On the other hand, the study results depicts that there is influence of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in independent commercial catering outlets within Kisumu County. This implies environmental factors, including geographic factors, economic factors and social factors, have a moderating influence on the food choices by hospitality clientele.

**Recommendations For Policy/Practice**

The results from the study show that cultural factors determine food choices by hospitality clientele in commercial catering outlets in Kisumu City. Thus basing on the results of the study, hospitality professionals should factor in the cultural element during menu planning to strike a balance between the catering policy, the financial policy as well as the marketing policy.

Accordingly, culinary training institutions within the country should embrace culture in their training programs so as to equip future hospitality personnel with diverse cultural knowledge, and therefore capable of meeting the hospitality clientele's diverse cultural market needs.

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