

Students' Choice of Dining Outlets during the COVID-19 Pandemic: What did Students Consider?



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ABSTRACT

The study investigated factors influencing tertiary students' choice of dining outlets amidst the COVID-19 pandemic with its concomitant challenges and restrictions in Ghana. A cross-sectional survey was employed using a simple random sampling technique through a lottery to select 222 final-year students from Sunyani Technical University. A questionnaire was employed to gather data from respondents. The findings of the study conveyed that all the factors investigated are influential to students' choice of dining outlets. The study further established that the gender of the students significantly influenced their choice of dining whilst age did not influence students' choice of dining outlets. It is envisaged that the study would be beneficial to the government, hospitality operators, and hospitality educators as it contributes to providing a deeper insight into current factors that influence students' choice of eatery during the heat of covid-19 pandemic. This study recommends that hospitality operators should focus more on the "cleanliness of serving wares equipment as well as all the areas examined to attract consumers in the study area. By complying with these recommendations, it is hoped that hospitality operators will become more competitive and will be able to meet the needs of their customers.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, there has been an increase in eating out of homes across the globe. As a result of the growing purchasing power of consumers, working mothers, increased number of eating outlets, population growth, changes in consumption patterns, and changes in household composition.¹ Therefore, to succeed in such a competitive industry, restaurant operators need to understand the factors that influence consumers' choice of eatery. In response to the ever-increasing consumers' habit of eating outside, the food service industry from all over the world is responding positively as it continues providing meals daily in a wide variety and with different types of operations to various types of consumers.² Prior research has focused mainly on factors influencing consumer's choice of restaurant in different countries and locations.³

¹ P. Deivanai, "Factors Influencing to Preference of Fast Food Restaurants," *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 18, no. 08 (August 2016): 20–25, <https://doi.org/10.9790/487X-1808042025>.

² J. Cousins, D. Lillierap, and S. Weekes, *Food and Beverage Service*, 9th ed. (UK: Hodder Education, 2014).

³ Jinkyung Choi and Jinlin Zhao, "Factors Influencing Restaurant Selection in South Florida: Is Health Issue One of the Factors Influencing Consumers' Behavior When Selecting a Restaurant?," *Journal of Foodservice Business Research* 13, no. 3 (2010): 237–51; Ahsan Azim et

However, the literature reviewed thus attested that there is a paucity of studies on tertiary students' choice of dining during the heat of COVID-19. These issues engaged the attention of the researchers because they had not been extensively addressed as evident in the literature. In particular, the study itself is considered useful for hospitality educators and hospitality practitioners, as it is the first that presents factors influencing tertiary students' choice of dining during the heat of COVID-19 with its concomitant challenges and restrictions in Ghana. In light of the above, this study seeks to fill the gaps identified as that would help contribute to improvement in theory and practice.

This study is actualized through the following objectives:

1. To identify factors influencing tertiary students' choice of dining outlets during the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To determine the impact of demographic factors among students in selecting dining outlets

The following hypotheses are thus proposed:

1. Ho: There is no significant relationship between demographic factors and students' choice of eatery.
2. Hi: There is a significant relationship between demographic factors and students' choice of eatery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors influencing consumers' choice of dining outlets

A study conducted by Chirawan identified the factors that influence a decision to dine at an upscale ethnic restaurant, their relative importance, as well as their relationships with dining occasions and consumer characteristics.⁴ A mail survey was used to collect data from the respondents. Factor analysis was used to refine the restaurant choice factors, and logistic regression analysis identified the five significant factors that influence consumers' decisions. These are dining experience, social status, service quality, food quality, and value for money, listed in order of their importance. The results of t-tests and ANOVA suggested that consumers perceived the restaurant choice factors differently based on their demographic characteristics. Jinkyung and Jinlin examined factors influencing consumers when selecting a restaurant in South Florida.⁵ Respondents were asked to rate provided attributes in a 5-point Likert scale according to their preferences in selecting a restaurant when dining out. Respondents were also asked to indicate on a 5-point scale the importance of healthy food for choosing a restaurant when dining out. Based on the results of one-way ANOVA and factor analysis, the study found that reasons for choosing a restaurant concerning health issues differed according to consumers' knowledge of health issues, annual income level, budget for dining out, and weight concerns. Azim et al. sought to investigate consumers' choice of restaurants in Pakistan.⁶ The semi-structured interview was conducted to gather data from the respondents. The results showed that customers were influenced by food quality and taste, cleanliness, physical environment, staff cooperation, and suitable environment for family gatherings. Murimi et al. conducted a qualitative study on factors that influence students' food choices.⁷ The study sought to determine what influences their food choices. A total of 80 students were interviewed across 12 focus groups in the Lincoln Parish school district in Louisiana. The results of the study included: a taste of food, food appearance, the name of the food, cultural preferences, and perceived food safety.

Oswald in his study, assessed the factors that affect consumer selection criteria in formal full-service restaurants in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.⁸ The questionnaire was the main instrument used to

al., "Factors Effecting the Customers Selection of Restaurants in Pakistan," *International Review of Management and Business Research* 3, no. 2 (2014): 1003; Nazrul Islam et al., "Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh," *Global Journal of Management and Business Research* 18, no. 7 (2018): 31–38; Olabanji Adedirin, "Factors Influencing Patronage and Effectiveness of Consumers' Demographic Attributes On Preference for Foodservice Outlets in Ilorin, Kwara State," *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 12 (June 1, 2020): 10–18, <https://doi.org/10.9790/487X-2206111018>.

⁴ Chirawan Sriwongrat, "Consumers' Choice Factors of an Upscale Ethnic Restaurant" (Lincoln University, 2008).

⁵ Choi and Zhao, "Factors Influencing Restaurant Selection in South Florida: Is Health Issue One of the Factors Influencing Consumers' Behavior When Selecting a Restaurant?"

⁶ Azim et al., "Factors Effecting the Customers Selection of Restaurants in Pakistan."

⁷ M W Murimi et al., "A Qualitative Study on Factors That Influence Students' Food Choices," *Journal of Nutrition and Health* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1–6.

⁸ Oswald Mhlanga, "What Are the Current Factors Affecting Consumer Selection Criteria in Formal Full Service Restaurants in Port Elizabeth, South Africa?," *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 2016.

gather data from 400 respondents. The results of the study showed that good service, quality of food, recommendations by others, and good ambiance, mostly influence the selection of formal full-service restaurants. In a similar study, Stati and Farhat conducted a study on factors influencing the selection of fine dining restaurants in New Delhi. The statistical tools used in the study were chi-square, ANOVA, and t-test methods. The results indicated that the demographic characteristics of respondents were positively related to the selection of restaurants. The study, also found that family get-togethers and occasion celebrations were major determinants of restaurant selection.⁹ In another study, Nazrul, Mohital, and Sazzad set out to identify the factors influencing the selection of restaurants by Dhaka city dwellers.¹⁰ A questionnaire was the main instrument used. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Their studies found that customers are influenced by customer service, privacy, the brand name of the restaurants, availability of junk food, and ready-made food are found significant for selecting food.

Ivana et al. investigated factors influencing students' choice of fast-food restaurants.¹¹ A survey was employed to gather data from 279 respondents through random sampling. A questionnaire was the main instrument employed and data was analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, means, T-test, and factor analysis. The results showed that the most important influences on students' choice are food quality, proximity and accessibility, and hygienic factors, primarily the cleanliness of the restaurant, kitchen, and service personnel. Further, Mohamad carried out a study to identify the factors of restaurant service attributes that influence customers in selecting and preferring restaurants in Dhaka city. A descriptive survey was conducted using a questionnaire with 160 respondents. The findings showed that significant factors of restaurant service attributes have a direct influence on customers' selection and preferences of restaurants in Dhaka city. The findings revealed that brand reputation, cost, food quality, environment, service attributes, recreational facilities, and staff attitude as factors that influenced consumers' choice of restaurants.¹²

In a related study, Olabanji, Risikat, and Adekunle examined factors influencing consumers' preference for food service outlets in Ilorin, Kwara State.¹³ Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from 685 non-randomly selected consumers from 7 purposely selected food service establishments. Results of the study revealed the quality of food served, staff friendliness, the location of the food service outlet, the price of food items, and the quality of food served. The study further established that consumers' demographics do not influence patronage of food service outlets in the Ilorin Metropolis.

Demographic Characteristics of Consumers' Choice

Age is constantly used with other demographic factors such as gender, income, and race while researching consumer behavior.¹⁴ Rai found out that young consumers of different ages have different behaviors and found that nineteen-year-old consumers may behave differently from twenty-five-year-old consumers.¹⁵ In a study, Summers *et al.* found that Malaysian customers' growing age will reduce the effect of age on buying intention.¹⁶ Consequently, consumers aged 17-21 are more likely to affect the intention to buy. The findings of Summers *et al.* contradict that of Khan et al. who found that the different age groups have little effect on buying intention.¹⁷ In furtherance, Madahi and Sukati found out that younger consumers

⁹ S. Stati, and M. Farhat, "Factors influencing the selection of fine dining restaurants in Delhi and NCR: An empirical study." *International journal of research and innovation in social science (IJRISS)* 1(4). (2017); ISSN 2454-6186.

¹⁰ Islam et al., "Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh."

¹¹ Ivana Blešić et al., "Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Fast Food Restaurants," *Ekonomika Poljoprivrede* 65, no. 1 (2018): 257–68, <https://doi.org/10.5937/ekoPolj1801257B>.

¹² B. B. Mohamad, "Factors influencing the customer for selection and preference of restaurants: A study on Dhaka City, Bangladesh." *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 7(7), (2019); 23-28.

¹³ Adediran, "Factors Influencing Patronage and Effectiveness of Consumers' Demographic Attributes On Preference for Foodservice Outlets in Ilorin, Kwara State."

¹⁴ Soyeon Kim and Jae-Eun Chung, "Restaurant Selection Criteria: Understanding the Roles of Restaurant Type and Customers' Sociodemographic Characteristics," 2011.

¹⁵ Bharat Rai, "The Effect of Demographic Factors on Consumer Purchase Intention in Buying Television Set in Kathmandu Valley: An Empirical Study," *Pravaha* 25, no. 1 (October 9, 2020): 23–32, <https://doi.org/10.3126/pravaha.v25i1.31871>.

¹⁶ Teresa A Summers, Bonnie D Belleau, and Yingjiao Xu, "Predicting Purchase Intention of a Controversial Luxury Apparel Product," *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal* 10, no. 4 (2006): 405–19.

¹⁷ Summers, Belleau, and Xu, "Predicting Purchase Intention of a Controversial Luxury Apparel Product"; Mubbsher Munawar Khan and Mariam Fasih, "Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty: Evidence from Banking Sector," *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS)* 8, no. 2 (2014): 331–54.

are more important in influencing buying intention on consumer-label products.¹⁸ When customer age increases the effect of age on intention to buy is high. On the other hand, Islam et al. studies found that age, gender difference, and income of the customers are influential in consumers' choice of restaurant in Dhaka, Bang.¹⁹ Wilson also set out to investigate the perceived gender effect on consumers' choices.²⁰ Wilson revealed that background music at the restaurant pushes females more than males. Rai's studies in Singapore also found that the gender and income of consumers influenced their choice of eatery.²¹ Moreover, Khan et al., also found that there is no significant difference between males and females in their choice of restaurant.²² In a related study, Rai set out to examine the impact of demographic factors on the purchase intention of consumers.²³ A questionnaire was used to collect primary data from respondents through a convenient sample technique. The results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female attitudes to purchasing intention. The findings also established that there is a significant difference in purchase intention among different levels of education. However, Rai's study contradicted Jain and Sharma's studies where they found that gender positively influenced consumers' choice of buying decision.²⁴

The various literature sources have revealed that several factors influence consumers' choice of restaurants.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey was therefore conducted using the simple random technique through lottery means to select 222 final-year students of the 2020/2021 academic year from Sunyani Technical University who have dined out during the heat of COVID-19. A questionnaire was employed to solicit data from the subjects. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of the demographic profiles of respondents whilst the second part of the questionnaire consisted of factors that influence students' choice of dining outlets on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from extremely unimportant to extremely important. A questionnaire was delivered to students in their lecture halls to fill out. To ensure consistency and uniformity in the processing of the data, the responses were cleaned and coded. Thereafter, the data was subjected to Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSSv.25) which is capable of generating descriptive and inferential statistics where descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used on the background profile of respondents. Mean and standard deviations were further used to analyze factors that influence student's choice of eatery whilst Bivariate analysis was used to assess the participants' demographical statistically linked with the choice of dining outlets. The study involved human beings, hence ethical issues were taken seriously during the exercise where oral permission was sought from the students before delivery of the questionnaires. All students who were willing and had dined at a restaurant during the heat of the covid-19 were allowed to participate in the study. All participants in this study were properly briefed and the objectives of the study were indicated to them. Finally, the participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

¹⁸ Abdolrazagh Madahi and Inda Sukati, "The Effect of External Factors on Purchase Intention amongst Young Generation in Malaysia," *International Business Research* 5, no. 8 (2012): 153.

¹⁹ Islam et al., "Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh."

²⁰ Stephanie Wilson, "The Effect of Music on Perceived Atmosphere and Purchase Intentions in a Restaurant," *Psychology of Music* 31, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 93–112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735603031001327>.

²¹ Rai, "The Effect of Demographic Factors on Consumer Purchase Intention in Buying Television Set in Kathmandu Valley: An Empirical Study."

²² Khan and Fasih, "Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty: Evidence from Banking Sector."

²³ Rai, "The Effect of Demographic Factors on Consumer Purchase Intention in Buying Television Set in Kathmandu Valley: An Empirical Study."

²⁴ Rai, "The Effect of Demographic Factors on Consumer Purchase Intention in Buying Television Set in Kathmandu Valley: An Empirical Study"; Anupam Jain and Meenakshi Sharma, "Brand Awareness and Customer Preferences for FMCG Products in Rural Market: An Empirical Study on the Rural Market of Garhwal Region," *VSRD International Journal of Business & Management Research* 2, no. 8 (2012): 434–43.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Bio-Data of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	78	35.1
Female	144	64.9
Age range		
18-25	104	47.1
26-30	68	30.8
31-35	31	14.0
36 years and above	19	8.1
Department		
Hospitality and Tourism	123	55.2
Agriculture	37	16.6
ICT	28	12.6
Pharmaceutical	34	15.6

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in the study. The majority of the participants in the study (64.9%) were females whereas 35.1% were males. The outcome of the study implies that the respondents who participated in the study were females dominant.

In terms of age, 47.1% of the respondents were between 18-25 years, 30.8% were between 26-30%, 14% were between 31-35 years and 8.1% were 36 years and above. The implication is that the respondents were tertiary students and the ages are a true reflection of school-going age at the tertiary. In terms of department, 55.2% of them were from Hospitality and Tourism, 16.6% were Agriculture, 12.6% were ICT and 15.7% were Pharmaceutical students. The implication is that the majority of the participants of the study were from the Department of Hotel and Tourism.

Table 2 Factors That Influence Students' Choices Of Dining Outlets

Rank	Factors	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Cleanliness of serving wares	4.34	0.92
2	Cleanliness of the environment	4.30	0.88
3	Quality of food	4.17	0.98
4	Price/affordability of the food	4.12	0.99
5	Customer satisfaction	4.08	0.96
6	Comfortability/serenity of the atmosphere	4.07	0.90
7	Taste of food	4.00	0.95
8	Proximity to university	4.00	0.95
9	Prompt service	3.97	0.86
10	Employee attitude	3.97	0.91
11	Safety of the food	3.92	0.97
12	Presentation/appearance of food	3.76	1.23
13	Availability of menu	3.66	1.00
14	Familiarity/name of food	3.57	1.15
15	Parking space	3.44	1.07

Table 2 presents the findings of what students considered when selecting a dining outlet. The first most important factor (mean=4.34) that students considered was "cleanliness of serving wares. This result is in accord with Mohamad's study which found that cleaned serving wares equipment was considered as the most important factor that influenced consumers' choice of dining.²⁵ The implication is that when students decide to eat, they usually look at the cleanliness of serving wares.

²⁵ Mohamad, "Factors influencing the customer for selection and preference of restaurants: A study on Dhaka City, Bangladesh."

The second most important factor (mean=4.30) was the cleanliness of the environment. The finding confirms Wong's study which found that a clean dining environment influenced consumers' choice of eating out.²⁶ This finding is alarming because a student's first impression of a dining outlet is from what they can see of the outlets' appearance. The outcome of the study further serves as a wake-up call for restaurant operators to create a more quality relaxed atmosphere for consumers.

The third most important factor agreed by the students (mean=4.17) was the quality of food. It implies that participants of this study are more conscious about the quality of food they consume when eating out. The result of the study confirms the findings of Adediran who found that consumers are more concerned about the quality of the food.²⁷

Respondents agreed (mean=4.17) that the price of the food was the fourth important factor. This result suggests that the price of the food has a significant influence on tertiary student's choice of dining outlets. These findings support the assertion by Winer who found that the price of the food influences consumers' choice of eatery.²⁸

Respondents further, agreed (mean=4.08) that customer satisfaction was the fifth most important factor. The implication is that the ability to satisfy customers is important in the service industry since satisfied customers will reward the organization with repeat business and words of advertisement. This finding is supported by Nazrul, Mohital, and Sazzad's studies where they found that customers are influenced by customer service.²⁹

In addition, the respondents agreed (mean=4.00) that the taste of food and proximity to the University ranked 7th and 8th respectively. Josiah and Monteiro concur that food taste pushes consumers' choices when selecting a restaurant.³⁰ The results suggest that the taste of food and proximity to the University were influential factors in the choice of tertiary students' dining outlet.

The other influential factor in the choice of the restaurant according to the study (mean=3.97) is prompt service and employee attitude ranked 9th and 10th. The results suggest that prompt service and the attitude of employees are also influential factors in students' decision-making in selecting dining outlets.³¹

How safe the food served came up as an important consideration (mean=3.92) in the choice of restaurants by the students. The study's finding implies that physical appearance and the service provider are of much importance to consumers in their choice of eatery. The findings of the study supported Namkung and Jang's studies which found that there was a significant relationship between safe food options and behavioral intentions.³²

Further, the respondents agreed (mean=3.76) that appearance/presentation is an important consideration in their choice of eatery. The implication is that the way the food is presented and how attractive it is influence customer choice of restaurants. The study results corroborate with Namkung and Jang's studies which found that presentation was the most important factor in the choice of consumers.³³

Additionally, the respondents agreed (mean=3.57) that familiarity with the food was one of the factors in their choice of dining outlets. The results suggest that customers' familiarity with food does not necessarily influence his or her choice of eatery.

Lastly, the respondents in this study, agreed (mean=3.57) that parking space is the least important factor in choosing a dining outlet. The study's finding suggests that parking space is the last ranking factor considered by participants of this study. This is probably why most of the participants of this study do not have their means of transport.

²⁶ A. Wong, "The role of emotional satisfaction in service encounters." *Managing Service Quality*, 14(5), (2014); 365-376.

²⁷ Adediran, "Factors Influencing Patronage and Effectiveness of Consumers' Demographic Attributes On Preference for Foodservice Outlets in Ilorin, Kwara State."

²⁸ Russell S Winer, "A Reference Price Model of Brand Choice for Frequently Purchased Products," *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, no. 2 (1986): 250-56.

²⁹ Islam et al., "Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh."

³⁰ Nicole, M. Monteiro and Diana J. Wall, "African Dance as Healing Modality Throughout the Diaspora: The Use of Ritual and Movement to Work Through Trauma," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 6 (September 2011).

³¹ Mhlanga, "What Are the Current Factors Affecting Consumer Selection Criteria in Formal Full Service Restaurants in Port Elizabeth, South Africa?"

³² Young Namkung and SooCheong Jang, "Does Food Quality Really Matter in Restaurants? Its Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions," *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* 31, no. 3 (2007): 387-409.

³³ Namkung and Jang, "Does Food Quality Really Matter in Restaurants? Its Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions."

Table 3: Choice Of Dining Outlets By Socio-Demographic Variables Following Bivariate Analysis

Variables	Choice of dining outlet		Chi-square value	P-value
	Agree	Disagree		
Gender				
Male	68(87.2%)	10(12.8%)	5.913	0.015
Female	122(84.7%)	22(15.3%)		
Age (years)				
18-25	30(28.8%)	74(71.2%)	0.751	0.687
26-30	38(55.9%)	30(44.1%)		
31-35	12(38.7%)	19(61.3%)		
36 years and above	7(38.9%)	11(61.1%)		

As indicated in Table 3, the bivariate analysis revealed that participants' gender ($p=0.015$) was statistically linked with the choice of dining outlets ($P\text{value} < 0.05$). The implication is that the gender of the customers significantly influences the choice of dining outlet. This finding confirms that gender appears to have a significant impact on consumer restaurant preferences. The study finding strengthens Stati and Farhat's and Islam et. al.'s studies that found that gender is positively related to the selection of restaurants.³⁴ Women are more likely than men to be in charge of restaurant and food selection.³⁵ However, the age of the respondents ($p=0.687$) was not statistically linked with the choice of dining outlets. This finding showed that the ages of the respondents do not significantly influence the choice of dining outlets. The finding of this study is in line with Olabanji's study where the age of the respondents does not influence the choice of eatery.³⁶ This finding is contrary to Islam et. al.'s study which found that the ages of consumers influenced the choice of restaurant in Dhaka, Bang.³⁷

Discussion Summary

The majority of the respondents who participated in the study were females. The population of the study is made up of the 2020/2021 academic year to select 222 final-year students from Sunyani Technical University through a simple random technique and questionnaire. The findings from the study are that all the factors investigated are influential to students' choice of dining outlets. However, the most important factors in order of ranking were identified as clean serving wares, clean dining environment, food quality, price of the food, customer satisfaction, serenity of the atmosphere, taste of food, nearness to university, prompt service, employee attitude, presentation of food, safety of the food, availability of menu, familiarity of the food and parking space that students considered when choosing a dining outlet. However, out of the 15 attributes, the most critical factors considered by the students are cleanliness of serving wares and parking space as least. The findings of the study have also, brought to the fore that gender significantly influences their choice of eatery whilst age does not influence their choice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommended that hospitality operators should focus more on the "cleanliness of serving wares equipment as well as all the areas examined to attract consumers in the study area. By complying with these recommendations, it is hoped that hospitality operators will become more competitive and will be able to meet the needs of all types of customers. It is also, recommended that researchers should carry out interviews with the needs and wants of different customers to explore the full potential of the markets. This is because consumers' values are different from one another and changes occur with time.

³⁴ Islam et al., "Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh."

³⁵ Robert B Schafer et al., "Marital Food Interaction and Dietary Behavior," *Social Science & Medicine* 48, no. 6 (1999): 787–96.

³⁶ Adediran, "Factors Influencing Patronage and Effectiveness of Consumers' Demographic Attributes On Preference for Foodservice Outlets in Ilorin, Kwara State."

³⁷ Stati, and Farhat, "Factors influencing the selection of fine dining restaurants in Delhi and NCR: An empirical study"; Islam et al., "Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh."

CONCLUSION

The study purported to investigate factors influencing tertiary students' choice of dining outlets during the heat of COVID-19 with its concomitant challenges and restrictions. The study has therefore provided insights into the variables influencing tertiary students' choice of dining outlets during the difficult conditions resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic in Ghana. These order of rankings of students' choice of dining outlets were cleanliness of serving wares, clean dining environment, food quality, price of the food, customer satisfaction, serenity of the atmosphere, taste of food, nearness to university, prompt service, employee attitude, presentation of food, safety of the food, availability of menu, familiarity of the food and parking space. The study has also, brought to the fore that gender significantly influences students' choice of eatery whilst age does not influence their choice. This study outcome would help hospitality operators in developing effective strategies for running profitable food service businesses that use online food delivery. During the pandemic, online food delivery services improved their marketing to encourage people to use more online food services following the Ghana Health Service social distancing guideline. This study provides a deeper insight to policymakers on tertiary students' choice of eatery so that they can have a better understanding of their needs.

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Conflicts of Interest Declaration

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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