

# **CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF FOOD SAFETY AND THEIR PATRONAGE OF SELECTED STREET FOOD VENDORS IN UMUAHIA METROPOLIS, ABIA STATE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the Customers' perception of food safety and their patronage of selected street food vendors in the Umuahia metropolis, Abia State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study used a structured questionnaire for data collection. The sample size of the study covered was two hundred and forty-six (246). The reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson product-moment at coefficients of 0.83. Mean and Standard deviation were used to analyze to data collected from the respondents. The study revealed that the quality of food, service, level of hygiene, organizational operation and healthy environment have a significant influence on customer's patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia metropolis. The findings of the study identified that quality of service has a significant influence on customer patronage and that food hygiene practices have a significant influence on customer's patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia metropolis. It is equally revealed that a high level of application of standard food safety and hygiene practices among street food vendors influences customer patronage. The paper recommended that Government and regulatory agencies need to ensure that all street food vendors abide by food safety and hygienic standards, to prevent the occurrence of food-borne illnesses and meet the expectation of consumers and stakeholders.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Food safety is critical for public health and economic development. The Hotel Industry offers a variety of food services, led by food handlers with diverse backgrounds. Food safety issues have been a worldwide problem for a long time now. A large population of people are affected by foodborne and health-related complications annually (Tonder, Rajagopal, Strohhahn, Stokes, Meyer & Mandernach 2013). Hence attention has been given to the implementation of food safety practices in most nations across the globe. The greatest impact of foodborne diseases has been reported in Africa which could be attributed to the lack of food safety knowledge practices (Powell & Attwell, 2013).

Food technology development in the last decades has brought both market opportunities and food safety perils. Therefore, food safety has become a major interest in many sectors including the hospitality industry, the food processing industry, government institutes and public health agencies. Those involved in food preparation and service play a vital role in the prevention of foodborne illness and/or food-borne disease and their actions can be critical in preventing outbreaks of food-borne illness and/or food-borne disease. Hence preventing the outbreaks is more a matter of understanding where food-borne disease originates and how food manufacturing and storage can increase the risks of that disease. This understanding should belong not only to the food handlers but also to the managers of industries related to food as well as the consumers themselves.

The best and most effective method of assuring food safety is to establish systematic and continuous training and education for the food handlers in the hospitality and food processing industries, managers of hospitality and food processing industries, government officers in charge of food safety as well as the consumers. Once the food safety issues are understood the hazard and its risks in foods can be minimized.

However, Clayton (2002) posited that although the number of food handlers receiving food safety training has increased, a high proportion of food poisoning outbreaks still occur as a result of poor food handling. This shows that there is still the need for training based on a risk-based approach as this demonstrates that behavioural changes will not occur merely as a result of training only.

Over 200 diseases are caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances such as heavy metals. This growing public health problem causes considerable socioeconomic impact through strains on healthcare systems, lost productivity and harming tourism and trade. These diseases contribute significantly to the global burden of disease and mortality. Foodborne diseases are caused by contamination of food and occur at any stage of the food production, delivery and consumption chain. They can result from several forms of environmental contamination including pollution in water, soil or air, as well as unsafe food storage and processing in the hotel.

The lack of such knowledge by food handlers may lead to infection of food prepared. Food handlers play an important role in ensuring the safety of food throughout production and storage. The attitude of a food handler is a crucial factor that may influence food hygiene behaviour and practices (Al-shabi, Mosithey & Husain, 2016). Improper handling is responsible for most cases of foodborne illness. Training for caterers has been shown to improve food hygiene knowledge and awareness and may result in improved hygiene practices (Jones & Angulo, 2014).

Foodborne disease outbreak is more serious due to inadequate sanitation, insufficient food safety regulations, weak regulatory structures, unsafe raw food, abused temperature, poor storage infrastructures, inadequate cooking, poor personal hygiene, improper handling methods, and cross-contamination of cooked food with uncooked raw food (Odeyemi & Parlov 2017). The food Handlers for street vendors should include healthy individuals who do not have any disease and they should undergo regular medical check-ups where necessary. In addition to being healthy, the food handlers take particular care of their hygiene and execute proper food handling behaviour. This is especially important because food handlers can cause cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods and they may jeopardize food hygiene by improper preparation, cooking and storage of foods. Food Handlers have the power to make a remarkable impact on public health in reducing foodborne diseases or food poisoning, the personal hygiene practices of workers at food production sites are a key factor (Green & Selman 2006).

Customers' perception of food safety is based on customer's beliefs and experiences. They want to feel confident that the food they consume is safe and free from contaminants. Factors that influence their perception include the cleanliness and hygiene practices of the establishment, such as proper handwashing and sanitation, as well as the handling and storage of ingredients. Customers also appreciate transparency, such as clear labelling of allergens and information about the sourcing and production of the food (Franklin et al 2015). Overall, customers want reassurance that their health and well-being are prioritized when it comes to food safety.

## **FOOD SAFETY**

Food safety is used as a scientific method/discipline describing the handling, preparation, and storage of food in ways that prevent foodborne illness. The occurrence of two or more cases of similar illnesses resulting from the ingestion of a common food is known as a food-borne disease outbreak. This includes several routines that should be followed to avoid potential health hazards. In this way, food safety often overlaps with food defence to prevent harm to consumers (Ayehu & Daniel 2014). The tracks within this line of thought are safety between industry and the market and then between the market and the consumer. In considering industry-to-market practices, food safety considerations include the origins of food including the practices relating to food labelling, food hygiene, food additives and pesticide residues, as well as policies on biotechnology and food and guidelines for the management of governmental import and export inspection and certification systems for foods. In line with market-to-consumer practices, it is that food ought to be safe in the market and the concern is safe delivery and preparation of the food for the consumer (Kibret & Abere 2018). Food can transmit pathogens which can result in the illness or death of the person or other animals. The main types of pathogens are bacteria, viruses, mould, and fungi. Food can also serve as a growth and reproductive medium for pathogens. In developed countries, there are intricate standards for food preparation, whereas in lesser developed countries there are fewer standards and less enforcement of those standards. In theory, food poisoning is 100% preventable. However, this cannot be achieved due to the number of persons involved in the supply chain, as well as the fact that pathogens can be introduced into foods no matter how many precautions are taken (Onyeneho & Hedberg 2017).

## **CUSTOMERS PERCEPTION OF FOOD SAFETY**

Customer perception is the customer's overall opinion, thoughts, awareness and feelings about a company and its product and service. Customer perception refers to the process by which a customer selects, organizes, and interprets information/stimuli inputs to create a meaningful picture of the brand or the product (Kibret, 2018). Customer Perception is very important for companies or brands as it tells them what their potential customers think about them (Franklin & Badrie, 2015). Customer Perception is very important because, if the customer forms a negative perception of your brand, no amount of work on the brand or product will improve sales. Customer Perception is also very important as many a time the perception stays for a long time in the minds of the consumers and sometimes it can be permanent as well (Asiegbu, Lebelo & Tabit, 2016).

Customer perceptions need to be positive as that will lead to the future scope of the brand. The negative image of the brand affects the overall customer perception. Customer Perception is equally valid in pre-sales as well as after-sales customer journeys. Sometimes poor customer service after the sales can affect the perception and cause reduced repeat business. Ineffective sales and marketing can cause negative perceptions even before a sale is made. Managing Customer Perception is one of the most critical tasks for a company looking to launch and maintain a big brand (Henry, Edward, Ogbonna & Ikpeme, 2017).

Customer's perception can be influenced in these areas;

### **a. Perception of quality**

The perception of quality is a global concept and depends on the factors consumers use to perceive and evaluate a service or product. Therefore, it is important to know the determining attributes of this evaluation (Ibáñez Casanova, 2003). Grunert, (2010) posited that quality is something intangible that can be perceived before and after the purchase. In general, consumers' feelings about the quality of the products are significant in indoor and outdoor food (street trade). Tinoco & Ribeiro, (2008), agreed that the perception of quality, in general, results from the comparison between customer expectations and perceived performance. The service, organization of the sales point, cleanliness, and safety to consume (in terms of healthiness), among other aspects, are determinants of the perceived quality of food consumed away from home.

For the growth of any market, the lowest price, the ease in food preparation and the media promotion must be associated with the perception of quality that consumers develop through the variety of food, taste, environment and hygiene, speed of service, location and parking (Tiwari & Verma, 2008). Almeida, Araujo, Mota, Barroso, & Mendon, (2014), agreed that these variables are also associated with the perception of quality in the street food trade.

### **b. Perception of Service**

Fontanillas, (2018) posited that service is essential for the vitality and perpetuation of the business. Regardless of the product or service sought, people form expectations regarding the quality of service.

Rossi & Chiş (2017) proposed that consumers seek some reciprocity from the place where they eat, expressed in the form of good service. This good service is represented by the cleanliness, behaviour, politeness and solicitude of the vendors.

Rheinländer Saad, See, & Adil, (2008) showed despite the general sceptical attitude towards the hygienic care of street vendors, trust in a well-known vendor has been identified as a decisive factor in choosing a street food location. It was observed that many consumers usually buy street food from the same vendor, with whom they have developed trust because of their service. Loriato & Pelissari (2017) posited that the service is a determining attribute for consumers when deciding on a food vendor. Consumers are becoming more interested in how they are treated, so service outweighs other considerations such as price.

### **c. Perception of Hygiene**

Food hygiene knowledge is very important, and it must be improved in food service establishments. Avoiding dirt at the place of food commercialization was already desirable long before the discovery of the transmission of diseases by bacteria, so cleaning does not refer only to the removal of germs, and it is associated with moral and cultural issues (Drechsel, Abaidoo, Amoah, & Cofie, (2000). The lack of such knowledge of hygiene by food handlers may lead to infection of food prepared. Food handlers play an important role in ensuring the safety of food throughout production and storage. Improper handling is responsible for most cases of foodborne illness. A food hygiene mistake in any food

service establishment, serving hundreds and thousands of customers has the potential to make many people ill (Jong & Angulo, 2010).

It is important to recognize the role of the variable hygiene and cleanliness as they act in attenuating the perceived risk of food consumption. Food handlers need proper hygiene practices concerning the cleanliness of hands and work clothes and correct methods of handling food and utensils. They must also not smoke cigarettes while preparing or serving food or work in an area while infected with any communicable disease (Albert, 2017). Education is just as important as legislation in approaching the reduction of foodborne illness outbreaks (Worsfold & Griffiths, 2011). Therefore, the training of food handling personnel is very critical, and personnel should be aware of their role and responsibility in protecting the food from contamination. All food handlers should be considered potential carriers of pathogenic microorganisms and should be trained in good manufacturing practices to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills necessary for handling food (Worsfold & Griffiths 2011).

#### d. Perception of Healthiness

According to Grunert (2010), healthiness is an invisible quality, which means that it cannot be directly accessed by consumers. Instead, healthiness is related to the quality of something but based on another quality indicator perceived by the consumer. For instance, the healthiness of an apple is assumed based on the cleanliness and colour of the fruit and not by direct measurement of healthiness. When it comes to food, quality is associated with the expected health benefits after consumption.

Parry & Palmer (2004), said the perception of healthiness in food consumption is unconsciously associated with disease prevention and health improvement. While, Grunert & Chrysochou (2014), posited that well-being-related elements can positively affect consumer assessments of product healthiness and stimulate purchasing.

The perception of a product's healthiness is inversely associated with the risk perceived by the consumption of it (Parry & Palmer 2004). It was perceived that the risk of domestic environments is lower than the perceived risk of street food trade. Thus, it is important to verify the risk conditions to reduce the incidence of food poisoning, which invariably reinforces the perception of healthiness.

Products that look healthier are more likely to be chosen by people accompanied by children, i.e. the presence of children influences the perception of quality regarding the benefit related to the food purchased (Arendt, Paez, & Strohhahn (2013). Schnettler & Schmidt (2015) associate the purchase of healthier foods to countries where there are lifestyle changes, where street food consumption is also influenced by the search for healthier foods, as in closed environments, such as fast food, the sale of healthy products is not a recurring practice.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

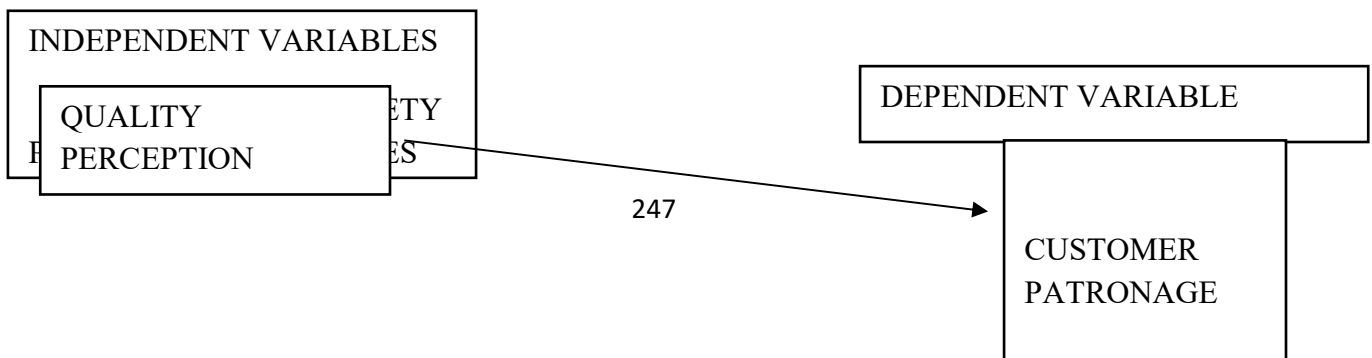
- i. To what extent does the quality of food influence customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia metropolis?
- ii. How does the quality of service influence customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia metropolis?
- iii. To what extent does the level of hygiene influence customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis?

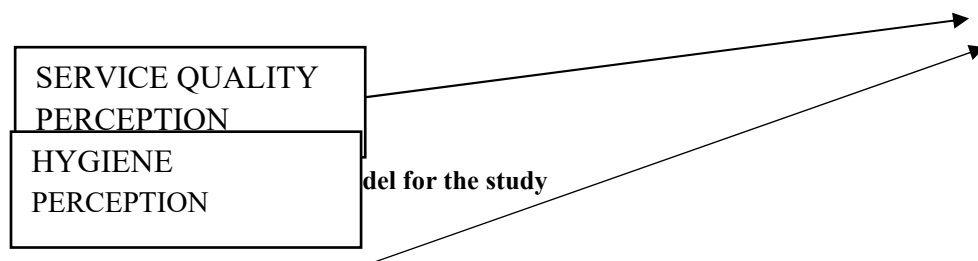
#### HYPOTHESIS

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** Quality of food has no significant influence on customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** Quality of service has no significant influence on customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis

**H0<sub>3</sub>:** Level of hygiene has no significant influence on customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis





**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in the Umuahia metropolis, of Abia State. The study adopts a convenient sampling technique where the researcher will administer a Questionnaire to available customers of street food vendors. The population for this study comprises the customers of street food vendors in the Umuahia metropolis, the population is infinite because the number of customers of street vendors is not known. The sample size of two hundred and forty-six (246) was derived from the population using the formula;  $n = \frac{pq(z)^2}{e^2}$

Where

n = the sample size

Z = 1.96 (z score responding to confidence intervals)

P = percentage of the item possessing a given characteristics

q = percentage of the item not possessing the characteristics

e = 0.05 (tolerable error, the margin error)

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT**

**Analysis of research questions 1:** To what extent does the quality of food influence customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondents on the influence of quality of food on customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis.

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Total no	Total score	Mean	Remark
1	Food quality influences customer patronage.	135 (66%)	55 (27%)	16 (7%)	0	206	737	3.58	Accept
2	Environmental quality influences customer patronage.	115 (55.8%)	57 (27.7%)	34 (16.5%)	0	206	699	3.39	Accept
4	Nutritional quality influences customer patronage.	142 (69%)	53 (25.7%)	11 (5.3%)	0	206	749	3.64	Accept
<b>Grand</b>							<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.54</b>	

Table 1 showed that 66% and 27% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that Food quality influences customer patronage, while 7% of the respondents disagreed that Food quality influences customer patronage 55.8% and 27.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that Environmental quality influences customer patronage, while 16.5% of the respondents disagreed that Environmental quality influences customer patronage. While 69% and 25.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that nutritional quality influences customer patronage, while .3% of the respondents disagreed. This is an indication that the quality of food influences customer patronage of street food vendors in the Umuahia Metropolis, as a grand mean of 3.54 is greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

**Analysis of research questions 2:** To what extent does the quality of service influence customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis?

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Total no	Total score	M	Remark
1	Service reliability influences customer patronage	98 (47.6%)	73 (35.4%)	35 (17%)	0	206	681	3.31	Accept
2	Service assurance influences customer patronage.	92 (44.7%)	92 (44.7%)	22 (10.6%)	0	206	688	3.34	Accept
3	Service responsiveness influences customer patronage	106 (51.5%)	72 (35%)	28 (13.5%)	0	206	696	3.44	Accept
4	Service empathy influences customer patronage.	110 (53.4%)	49 (23.8%)	30 (14.5%)	17 (8.3%)	206	664	3.22	Accept
<b>Grand</b>							<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.33</b>	

Table 2 showed that 47.6% and 35.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that service reliability influences customer patronage, while 17% of the respondents disagreed, 44.7 % and 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that service assurance influences customer patronage, while 10.6% of the respondents disagreed, 51.5% and 35% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that service responsiveness influences customer patronage while 13.5% of the respondents disagreed. 53.4% and 23.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that service empathy influences customer patronage, while 14.5% and 8.3% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that service empathy influences customer patronage. This is an indication that quality of service influences customer patronage of food street vendors in Umuahia Metropolis, as the grand mean of 3.33 is greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

**Analysis of research questions 3:** To what extent does the level of hygiene influence customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis?

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Total no	Total score	M	Remarks
1	Separation of raw from cooked foods to prevent contamination influence customer patronage	78 (37.9%)	73 (35.4%)	35 (17%)	20 (9.7%)	206	621	3.01	Accept
2	Prevention of contaminated food from pathogens influences customer patronage	62 (30.1%)	74 (35.9%)	22 (10.6)	48 (23.3)	206	584	2.83	Accept

3	Cooking foods for the appropriate length of time and at the appropriate temperature	88 (42.7%)	72 (35%)	28 (13.5%)	12 (5.8%)	206	636	3.09	Accept
4	Storing food at the proper temperature influences customer patronage	110 (53.4%)	49 (23.8%)	30 (14.5%)	17 8.3%	206	517	2.51	Accept
5	Washing of hands before preparation and service influences customer patronage	66 (32%)	73 (35.4%)	35 (17%)	32 (15.5)	206	585	2.84	Accept
6	Wearing protective clothing influences customer patronage	92 (44.7%)	92 (44.7%)	22 (10.6%)	0	206	688	3.34	Accept
7	Making use of food safety equipment influences customer patronage	90 (43.7%)	80 (38.8%)	28 (13.6%)	8 (3.9%)	206	664	3.22	Accept
8	Ensuring the tools and equipment are clean and sanitized influence customer patronage	110 (53.4%)	49 (23.8%)	30 (14.5%)	17 (8.3%)	206	664	3.22	Accept
9	Coughing or sneezing over food influence customer patronage	98 (47.6%)	80 (38.8%)	28 (13.6%)	0	206	688	3.34	
	<b>GRAND MEAN</b>							<b>3.04</b>	

Table 3 shows 37.9% and 35.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that separation of raw from cooked foods helps to prevent contamination, while 17% and 9.7% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 30.1% and 39.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that prevention of contaminated food from pathogens ensure quality food, while 10.6% and 23.3% of the respondents disagreed. 42.7% and 35% of the respondents that cooking foods for the appropriate length of time and at the appropriate temperature produces quality food, while 13.5% and 5.8% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 53.4% and 23.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that storing food at the proper temperature influence customer patronage, while 14.5% and 8.3% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. 32% and 35.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that washing hands before preparation and service connotes hygiene that influences customer patronage, while 17% and 15.5% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. 44.7% and 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that wearing protective clothing influences the hygienic quality of food, while 10.6% of the respondents disagreed. 43.7% and 38.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that making use of food safety equipment influences customer patronage, while 13.6% and 3.9% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. 53.4% and 23.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that ensuring the tools and equipment are clean and sanitized influences customer patronage while 14.5% and 8.3% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. 47.6% and 38.8 of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that coughing or sneezing over food influences

customer patronage of street food vendors, while 13.8% of the respondents disagreed. This is an indication that the level of hygiene influences customer patronage of food street vendors in the Umuahia Metropolis as the grand mean of 3.04 is greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESES**

The study analyzed the customer’s perception of food safety practices and customer patronage. Food quality, service quality, hygiene practices, organizational operation and healthy environment were used as independent variables while customer patronage was used as the dependent variable.

Table 4: Customer’s perception of food safety practices and customer patronage.  
**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.960 <sup>a</sup>	.922	.919	.24057	.291

a. Predictors: (Constant), HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, HYGIENE PRACTICES, ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATION, SERVICE QUALITY, FOOD QUALITY

b. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	113.021	5	22.604	390.566	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	9.607	166	.058		
	Total	122.628	171			

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

b. Predictors: (Constant), HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, HYGIENE PRACTICES, ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATION, SERVICE QUALITY, FOOD QUALITY

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.176	.089		1.986	.049
	FOOD QUALITY	.706	.117	.680	6.036	.000
	SERVICE QUALITY	-.167	.111	-.159	-1.499	.036
	HYGIENE PRACTICES	.219	.099	.223	2.199	.029
	ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATION	.078	.090	.088	.858	.032
	HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT	.134	.067	.141	1.986	.049

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

The F statistic with 390.566 has a probability of 0.049% level of significance. Since the probability of the F statistics is below the 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H<sub>0</sub> and therefore conclude that a healthy environment has a significant influence on customer patronage of street food vendors in Umuahia Metropolis.

The coefficient of determination R-square of 0.922 implied that 92.2% of the sample variation in the dependent variable (customer patronage) is explained or caused by the explanatory variables (Food quality, service quality, hygiene practices, organizational operation and healthy environment) while 7.8% is unexplained. This remaining 7.8% could be caused by other factors or variables not built into the model. The value of R-square is an indication of a relationship between the dependent variable (customer patronage) and the independent variable (Food quality, service quality, hygiene practices, organizational operation and healthy environment). The value of the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is 0.919. This shows that the regression line which captures 91.9 per cent of the total variation in customer patronage is caused by variation in the explanatory variable (Food quality, service quality, hygiene practices, organizational operation and



healthy environment) specified in the model with less than 6.0 per cent accounted for the stochastic error term. The F-statistic was also used to test the overall significance of the model. The F-value of 390.566 with the probability (sig) value of 0.000 is an indication that the model is statistically significant at a 5 per cent level of significance.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of research question 1 showed that the quality of food influenced customers' patronage of street food vendors in the Umuahia metropolis. This is in line with Knight, Worosz and Todd (2017), who showed that perception of food safety influences how often consumers eat at restaurants and that standard food safety practices influence customer patronage.

The findings of research question 2 revealed that quality of service influenced customers' patronage of street food vendors in the Umuahia metropolis. This follows Icek Ajzen's theory of planned behavior that stated customer's behavior depends on the type of quality of service rendered to that customer (Ajzen, 1991).

The findings of research question 3 revealed that the level of hygiene influenced customers' patronage of street food vendors in the Umuahia metropolis. This is in agreement with Etim, Okoi, Ina & Ekpo (2018) in their finding of the study, which showed that there was a significant correlation between the perception of proper food handling and hygiene practices among hospitality industries. Also Powell, and Attwell, (2013) revealed that there is a high level of application of the standard food safety and hygiene practices among food vendors in hotels. Furthermore, Kim, Raab and Bergman (2010), discovered that vendor's physical environments are tangible, cues, which are, used to assess, the quality of services provided by food vendors.

### CONCLUSION

Food safety is about producing, handling, storing and preparing food in such a way as to prevent infection and contamination in the food production chain, and to help ensure that food quality and wholesomeness are maintained to promote good health. Customer choice of hotels is positively associated with the level of environmental cleanliness and sanitation. Poor environmental sanitation has adverse implications on the health of consumers hence, those consumers who are conscious of their health consider good environmental sanitation as an important factor in choosing a food vending service. The physical environment itself may produce feelings of excitement, pleasure, or relaxation. However, standard food safety practices automatically influence consumer choice of street food vendors.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Government and regulatory agencies need to monitor food street vendors to ensure they meet the food safety and hygienic standards, to prevent the occurrence of food-borne illnesses in the community.
2. The street food vendors should ensure they do not have any disease, and they should undergo regular medical check-ups. In addition to being healthy, it is also important that the vendors and their workers take particular care of their hygiene and execute proper food-handling behaviour.
3. Furthermore, the food Utensils or Equipment that come into regular contact with foods should be made of a material able to be cleaned and disinfected, resistant to corrosion and non-toxic. The equipment should be arranged in a way as to enable it and the area around it to be cleaned sufficiently.
4. Street food vendors should have personal protective equipment for themselves and all employees and ensure they wear/use them while working.
5. They should ensure that all safety protocols are observed at all times.

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