

## Assessing the Drivers of Consumer Patronage for Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the drivers of consumer patronage for Igbo traditional food outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State, focusing on a sample of 150 respondents across 10 different food outlets. The central problem addressed is the need to understand how factors such as price, food quality, customers' demographics, vendor's physical environment, menu familiarity, and culture influence consumer patronage. Utilizing a descriptive research design, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics for demographic profiling and the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression method to assess the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The findings reveal that quality of food ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and cultural relevance ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) significantly influence consumer patronage, while price affordability and atmosphere of the outlet show weaker correlations ( $\beta = 0.15$  and  $\beta = 0.145$ , respectively). The analysis also indicates service quality as a key driver, especially among younger consumers. The study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence consumer behaviour. Recommendations highlight the need for stakeholders in Igbo traditional food outlets prioritize enhancing service and food quality through staff training and maintaining high culinary standards. Moreover, increasing the cultural relevance of menu offerings can create a stronger connection with patrons. While competitive pricing is valuable, emphasizing quality and customer experience should take precedence. Additionally, improving the atmospheric elements of the outlets can significantly augment the overall dining experience, promoting higher levels of customer satisfaction and repeat visits. By adopting these strategies, Igbo traditional food outlets can better position themselves in a competitive market and foster greater patronage.

**Keywords:** Consumer Patronage, Igbo Traditional Food, Awka Metropolis, Quality of Food, Price Affordability, Cultural Relevance, Service Quality, Atmosphere of the Outlet, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The culinary landscape has undergone significant transformation in recent years, with increasing globalization and cultural interchange reshaping consumer preferences and dining habits. Traditional cuisines, like Igbo foods, have begun to carve a niche within this rapidly evolving sphere. Igbo traditional cuisine, rooted in the cultural practices of the Igbo people of Nigeria, offers a rich tapestry of flavors, ingredients, and preparation techniques that reflect the historical and social fabric of its community. However, despite the burgeoning interest in ethnic cuisines globally, traditional Igbo food outlets face challenges in attracting and retaining patrons in a competitive market. Understanding the factors that drive customer patronage in these establishments is essential to enhance their visibility and viability. Recent literature has indicated that food quality and service quality play pivotal roles in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty in the food service industry (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2018). Quality of food encompasses several dimensions, including taste, freshness, nutritional value, and presentation. In the context of traditional cuisines, authenticity is also a vital element (Cossio et al., 2017). For Igbo traditional food outlets, ensuring that dishes are prepared with traditional methods and ingredients can enhance their attractiveness to both indigenous consumers and culinary tourists interested in authentic dining experiences. Furthermore, the growing trend of health consciousness among consumers has led to an increased demand for high-quality, locally sourced ingredients, particularly in ethnic foods (Racine et al., 2020).

Service quality, which pertains to the interaction between staff and customers, is equally vital for the sustained success of food outlets. According to a study by Ladhari et al. (2019), positive service interactions significantly correlate with increased customer satisfaction and repeat patronage. For traditional food outlets, where customer experience often intersects with cultural education, robust service quality can differentiate them from competitors. Staff training in both culinary arts and cultural nuances can enhance the dining experience and foster lasting connections with patrons, thereby driving frequenter visits. In addition to food and service quality, cultural relevance significantly influences dining choices. As globalization continues to blend culinary practices, many consumers are increasingly seeking dining options that resonate with their cultural identity (Li et al., 2018). Igbo traditional food outlets, by focusing on culturally relevant dishes and experiences, can tap into this market trend, stimulating interest among members of the Igbo diaspora as well as others seeking authentic culinary experiences. This need is particularly pronounced in urban settings, where multicultural populations look for familiar tastes and flavors that evoke a sense of home and belonging. Price affordability and perception of value are other critical aspects that underpin customer choice in the food service sector. While consumers may be willing to pay a premium for high-quality food and excellent service, price plays a central role in shaping overall satisfaction (Pappu & Quester, 2016). Mechanics of price perception, including perceived value versus actual price, are crucial since they affect customers' willingness to return. For Igbo traditional food outlets, establishing pricing strategies that communicate value while remaining competitive is essential to capture a diverse customer base, including price-sensitive consumers.

Atmosphere - the physical and emotional environment that a customer experiences when dining out - completes the multi-faceted framework of factors influencing patronage. Research by Ariffin et al. (2020) has shown that restaurant ambience, which includes décor, lighting, and spatial layout, significantly affects customer perceptions and satisfaction. For traditional food establishments, creating an atmosphere that reflects the cultural heritage of the Igbo community can enhance the overall dining experience and promote a deeper connection with patrons. Elements such as culturally themed décor, traditional music, and

community-oriented events can transform dining into a holistic cultural experience. This study aims to explore the interplay between these various factors that influence patronage frequency at Igbo traditional food outlets. Previous studies have addressed individual aspects such as food quality, service quality, and ambience; however, a comprehensive examination of these elements within the context of Igbo cuisine remains sparse. Therefore, this research not only aims to fill this gap but also seeks to provide actionable insights that can help traditional food outlets thrive in a competitive landscape. By understanding how food quality, service quality, cultural relevance, price affordability, and atmosphere collectively impact customer choices, relevant stakeholders can develop strategies that enhance the allure and sustainability of Igbo traditional food outlets.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The rapid globalization of culinary practices has significantly shifted consumers' eating habits and preferences, leading to complex challenges for traditional food outlets, particularly those specializing in ethnic cuisines like Igbo traditional food. Despite a growing interest in diverse culinary experiences globally, many Igbo traditional food outlets grapple with low patronage frequency. This phenomenon raises critical questions about the reasons behind their struggles and necessitates a thorough investigation into the factors influencing customer choices. While various studies have explored food quality and service quality as determinants of customer satisfaction in dining experiences (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2018; Ladhari et al., 2019), there remains a dearth of specific research that encapsulates the dynamics of patronage frequency in the context of Igbo traditional food outlets. Understanding these dynamics is essential for stakeholders aiming to enhance their competitiveness and attract a loyal customer base. Furthermore, existing literature has predominantly focused on broader trends in the food service industry, covering aspects such as overall customer satisfaction (Ariffin et al., 2020) and the experiences of ethnic restaurants in urban settings (Li et al., 2018). Research on Igbo traditional food outlets is notably limited, making it difficult to identify the unique factors that may specifically affect these establishments. For example, while studies have consistently highlighted the importance of food quality and service in ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pappu & Quester, 2016), the influence of cultural relevance in attracting patrons to traditional food outlets remains inadequately explored. As customers seek to engage with their cultural heritage through dining experience, traditional Igbo restaurants must effectively convey their cultural values and culinary authenticity to appeal to a broader audience—including both local consumers and the Igbo diaspora.

Price sensitivity is another critical issue that traditional food outlets must navigate. Although consumers are often willing to pay a premium for authentic experiences and high-quality food, perceived value plays a vital role in determining dining decisions (Cossio et al., 2017). Many Igbo traditional food outlets operate in a competitive landscape, where pricing strategies must balance affordability with maintaining quality and authenticity. However, a lack of understanding regarding how price influences consumer perceptions and their consequent behavior in these establishments persists in current literature. This gap underscores the necessity for an in-depth investigation into how Igbo traditional food outlets can formulate competitive pricing strategies while offering perceived value that resonates with their customer base. Additionally, the ambience of a dining establishment impacts customer experiences and can significantly affect patronage frequency. Studies suggest that an inviting and culturally themed atmosphere can enhance customer satisfaction and stimulate repeat visits (Ariffin et al., 2020). For Igbo traditional food outlets, creating a dining environment that reflects their cultural heritage may not only attract patrons but also foster a connection that extends beyond the meal itself. Yet, specific research examining the relationship between restaurant ambience and the frequency of visits to Igbo traditional restaurants is scarce. Without this vital information, stakeholders may struggle to invest in the right atmosphere that aligns with consumer expectations and enhances the overall dining experience.

The prevailing issues surrounding low patronage frequency at Igbo traditional food outlets can be traced to a combination of insufficient literature addressing unique factors affecting these establishments, the challenge of effectively communicating cultural authenticity, the complexities surrounding price sensitivity, and the importance of creating a conducive dining atmosphere. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic understanding of the interplay between quality, service, cultural relevance, pricing strategies, and ambience-specific to Igbo traditional eateries. Such insights are crucial for restaurant owners and stakeholders in the industry, as they seek to devise strategic interventions aimed at not only increasing patronage but also fostering a sustainable business model that celebrates and promotes Igbo culinary heritage.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The main objective of this study is to examine drivers of consumer patronage for igbo traditional food outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State. Specifically the study intends to:

1. Ascertain the effect of quality of food on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.
2. Examine the influence of price affordability on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.
3. Determine the influence of cultural relevance on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.
4. Ascertain the effect of service quality on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.
5. Ascertain the effect of atmosphere of the outlet on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.

### ***Hypotheses of the Study***

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

**H01:** Quality of food has no significant influence on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.

**H02:** Price affordability has no significant influence on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.

**H03:** Cultural relevance has no significant influence on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.

**H04:** Service quality has no significant influence on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.

**H05:** Atmosphere of the outlet has no significant influence on consumer's patronage of Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study utilizes the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as its theoretical framework to assess the factors influencing patronage frequency in Igbo traditional food outlets. Developed by Ajzen (1991), the Theory of Planned Behaviour posits that individual behaviour is directly influenced by their intentions, which are affected by three main components: attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This theory has wide-ranging applications in various fields, including psychology, marketing, and consumer behaviour, making it an appropriate theoretical lens to examine the dynamics at play in the context of Igbo traditional food outlets.

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### *Proponents of the Theory*

The Theory of Planned Behaviour was initially proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985, evolving from the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action. Ajzen (1991) emphasized the role of individuals' beliefs about the consequences of their actions and their assessment of social pressures regarding those actions. The TPB offers a comprehensive framework that captures the cognitive processes subserving human behaviour, thus providing insight into how various factors shape consumer intentions and actions.

### *Tenets/Assumptions of the Theory*

1. **Attitudes Towards the Behaviour:** This aspect involves the individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour in question. In the context of this study, customers' attitudes toward dining at Igbo traditional food outlets can be influenced by factors such as food quality, authenticity, and previous dining experiences. Research has shown that positive attitudes toward a food type are linked to increased consumer demand (Schmidt et al., 2020).
2. **Subjective Norms:** This tenet refers to the perceived social pressure to engage or not engage in a behaviour. In the case of Igbo traditional food outlets, subjective norms can stem from cultural influences and community expectations. For instance, if social circles encourage consuming traditional food, patrons may be more likely to frequent these establishments (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2018).
3. **Perceived Behavioural Control:** This component reflects individuals' perceptions of their ability to perform behaviour. For patrons of Igbo traditional food outlets, perceived behavioural control may include factors such as affordability, accessibility, and the availability of authentic dishes. Research indicates that higher perceived behavioural control often correlates with increased participation in specific behaviours (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

### *Applications of the Theory to the Study*

By employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour, this study aims to analyze how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control interact to influence patronage frequency in Igbo traditional food outlets. Specifically, it will investigate how food quality (attitude), community influences (subjective norms), and pricing strategies (perceived control) affect customers' intentions toward dining at these establishments.

1. **Food Quality as Attitude:** Recognizing that quality is paramount in influencing patrons' decisions, this study will explore how favourable perceptions of Igbo traditional cuisine - characterized by authenticity and flavourful preparation techniques - build positive attitudes among potential customers.
2. **Cultural Community Influence as Subjective Norms:** The research will examine how social and cultural networks impact dining choices. This involves assessing whether the promotion of Igbo culinary traditions within community settings, such as events or gatherings, can create positive social pressures that encourage increased patronage.
3. **Pricing and Accessibility as Perceived Behavioural Control:** Understanding the interplay between pricing strategies and perceived value is vital. This study will assess how patrons' perceptions of affordability and the convenience of accessing Igbo traditional food outlets influence their likelihood to dine there.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour provides a robust framework for understanding the multifaceted influences on consumer behaviour in the context of Igbo traditional food outlets. By examining attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, this study aims to unearth valuable insights that can inform strategies to enhance customer patronage and promote the sustainability of these establishments.

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### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Design*

The study employs a mixed-method research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect utilizes a survey to gather data regarding consumer preferences, attitudes, cultural influences, and perceptions of Igbo traditional food outlets. The qualitative component involves focus group discussions and interviews with restaurant owners and customers to explore deeper insights into the dynamics of patronage and the role of cultural significance in dining experiences.

#### *Area of Study*

The research is situated in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria, which serves as the capital city of the state and a significant cultural hub for the Igbo ethnic group. Awka Metropolis encompasses notable neighbourhoods such as Amawbia, Ifite-Akwa, Ezinato, Ishiagu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise, Okpuno, Umuawulu, and the Awka city center. This area was chosen due to its diversity of traditional food outlets and its importance to the Igbo culinary heritage, making it an ideal location to investigate patronage behaviours.

#### *Population of the Study*

The population for this study consists of consumers who dine at Igbo traditional food outlets within Awka Metropolis. This includes both local residents and members of the Igbo diaspora residing in the area who seek authentic Igbo culinary experiences.

#### *Sample Size*

The sample size for this study was determined using a purposive sampling technique, which ensures representation across different neighbourhoods within Awka Metropolis. A sample of 150 respondents across 10 different various Igbo traditional food outlets in each of the notable neighbourhoods such as Amawbia, Ifite-Akwa, Ezinato, Ishiagu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise, Okpuno, Umuawulu, and the Awka city center. This sample size not only allows for statistical significance but also provides ample data for a robust analysis.

#### *Data Collection*

Data were collected through face-to-face methods to reach a broader audience. The quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires distributed physically at selected restaurants.

#### *Data Collection Instrument*

The primary data collection instrument for this study is a structured questionnaire designed to measure factors related to patronage frequency, including attitudes toward Igbo food, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and demographic data. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions (using a Likert scale).

#### *Method of Data Analysis*

Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, will summarize the main characteristics of the data. Inferential statistics, including regression analysis, will be employed to explore the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable (patronage frequency). This analysis will be conducted using statistical software such as SPSS.

#### *Method of Data Analysis*

The data was obtained by the researcher with the help of a research assistant using a structured questionnaire that administered to customers that were selected from the selected Igbo traditional food outlets within Awka Metropolis.

### The regression model

The regression model of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS), T-test and F-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses of the study and the overall fitness of the model. Linear regression model of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) approach was used to analyse the objectives in order to ascertain the influence and also determine the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable in the conceptualized model of the study. The use of Ordinary Least Square (OLS), is informed by the fact that under normality assumption for the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimator is normally distributed and is said to be best, unbiased linear estimator (Gujarati & Porter, 2008).

Thus, the model of this study is stated as follows:

*The functional form of the model is*

$$CP = f(QF, PA, CR, SQ, AOA) \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

*The mathematical form of the model is*

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 QF + \beta_2 PA + \beta_3 CR + \beta_4 SQ + \beta_5 AOA \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

*The econometric form of the model is*

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 QF + \beta_2 PA + \beta_3 CR + \beta_4 SQ + \beta_5 AOA + \alpha_i \dots\dots (3)$$

Where; CP = Consumer's Patronage

QF = Quality of food

PA = Price affordability

CR = Cultural relevance

SQ = Service quality

AOA = Atmosphere of the outlet

$\beta_0$  = Intercept of the model

$\beta_1 - \beta_6$  = Parameters of the model

$\alpha_i$  = Stochastic error term

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Demographic profile of the respondents

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	90	60.0
	Female	60	40.0
<b>Age Group</b>	18-24 years	25	16.7
	25-34 years	45	30.0
	35-44 years	40	26.7
	45 years and above	40	26.7
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	50	33.3
	Married	70	46.7
	Divorced	30	20.0

<b>Educational Level</b>	Secondary School	25	16.7
	Tertiary Education	85	56.7
	Postgraduate	40	26.7
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Less than ₦20,000	30	20.0
	₦20,001 - ₦50,000	40	26.7
	₦50,001 - ₦100,000	50	33.3
	Above ₦100,000	30	20.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The demographic shows that males account for 60.0% of the respondents while females constitute 40.0%. This greater representation of males in the sample may indicate higher active involvement in purchasing decisions for traditional food, possibly reflecting cultural dynamics where men tend to lead in such choices in some households. The age distribution reveals that the predominant age group is 25-34 years (30.0%), followed closely by those aged 35-44 years (26.7%). This suggests that a considerable portion of the consumer base is made up of young to middle-aged adults who are likely balancing traditional values with modern lifestyles. The younger demographic (16.7% aged 18-24) still showcases potential for growth in appealing marketing strategies. A notable proportion of respondents are married (46.7%), indicating strong family connections to traditional dining. Married individuals may have different preferences and consumption patterns, often prioritizing meals that resonate with their cultural heritage. The sample presents a well-educated group, with 56.7% of respondents having attained tertiary education. This level of education might correlate with greater awareness regarding food quality, health, and nutrition, which can positively influence their patronage of traditional food outlets. The income distribution shows that 33.3% of respondents fall within the ₦50,001 - ₦100,000 range, while 20.0% earn above ₦100,000. This indicates a significant number of higher-income consumers who are likely to demand quality and authentic culinary experiences, making them crucial targets for traditional food outlets aiming to enhance consumer patronage. The demographic profile indicates a strong potential market for Igbo traditional food outlets in Awka, with higher male representation and significant numbers of middle to high-income consumers. These insights can guide vendors in tailoring their services and offerings to match the preferences and characteristics of their clientele. By understanding these demographics, stakeholders can strategize marketing efforts to boost consumer excitement and loyalty towards traditional cuisines.

### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 2: Respondents' ratings for each independent variable and the dependent variable**

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Quality of Food</b>	4.20	0.75
<b>Price Affordability</b>	3.80	0.94
<b>Cultural Relevance</b>	4.10	0.85
<b>Service Quality</b>	4.50	0.60
<b>Atmosphere of the Outlet</b>	4.30	0.70
<b>Patronage Frequency</b>	4.00	0.82

Source: Field Survey, 2024

**Quality of Food** shows a **Mean** of 4.20 and a **Standard Deviation** of 0.75. A mean score of 4.20 indicates that respondents generally have a positive perception of the quality of food at Igbo traditional food outlets, leaning toward "Agree." The relatively low standard deviation suggests that there is consensus among respondents regarding the quality—most of them agree on this item. **Price Affordability** revealed a **Mean** of 3.80 and **Standard Deviation** of 0.94. The mean score reveals a favorable attitude towards price affordability but closer to neutrality than the other factors. This suggests that while many respondents find prices generally

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acceptable, there are notable variations in opinion, as indicated by the higher standard deviation. **Cultural Relevance** indicated a **Mean** of 4.10 and a **Standard Deviation** of 0.85. A mean of 4.10 indicates that respondents perceive the cultural relevance of the food positively, again moving toward "Agree". The standard deviation reflects a moderate level of agreement across the sample, suggesting a shared appreciation for cultural aspects. **Service Quality** shows a **Mean** of 4.50 and **Standard Deviation** of 0.60. The high mean of 4.50 indicates that service quality is seen as one of the strongest attributes of these outlets, with respondents agreeing strongly on this aspect. The low standard deviation reinforces that the opinions on service quality are tightly clustered near the higher end of the scale. **Atmosphere of the Outlet** revealed a **Mean**: 4.30 and **Standard Deviation** of 0.70. The average score for atmosphere indicates a positive experience; respondents find the atmosphere attractive and conducive to dining. The tight clustering in responses signifies a strong consensus on the pleasantness of the dining environment. **Patronage Frequency** revealed a **Mean** of 4.00 and **Standard Deviation** of 0.82. A mean of 4.00 indicates that respondents tend to visit these outlets regularly, suggesting healthy patronage behavior. The standard deviation indicates moderate agreement but also indicates there are some variations in how often different respondents visit. The results from the descriptive statistical analysis indicate strong positive perceptions of various independent variables affecting consumer patronage at Igbo traditional food outlets. Quality of food and service quality stand out as the most positively regarded attributes, while price affordability leads to a more nuanced view that reflects some diversity in respondents' opinions. Understanding these perceptions can help food vendors in strategizing ways to enhance consumer experience, influence patronage frequency, and ultimately, drive success in the traditional food market.

### Regression Analysis Results

**Table 3: Regression Result on Drivers of Consumer Patronage for Igbo Traditional Food Outlets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State**

Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	Sig. Level
Intercept	0.50	0.15	0.03
Quality of Food	0.30	0.05	0.01
Price Affordability	0.20	0.07	0.04
Cultural Relevance	0.25	0.06	0.03
Service Quality	0.35	0.04	0.00
Atmosphere of the Outlet	0.15	0.05	0.05

### Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R	0.92
R <sup>2</sup>	0.85
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.83
F-statistic	45.67
Sig. F	0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The coefficients represent the expected change in the dependent variable (patronage frequency) for a one-unit increase in each independent variable, holding other variables constant.

Quality of Food (0.30): For each unit increase in the perception of food quality, the frequency of patronage increases by 0.30.

Price Affordability (0.20): An increase in price affordability perception increases the patronage frequency by 0.20.

Cultural Relevance (0.25): A one-unit increase in cultural relevance perception is associated with an increase of 0.25 in patronage frequency.

Service Quality (0.35): This variable has the highest impact, with a one-unit increase corresponding to a 0.35 increase in patronage frequency.

Atmosphere of the Outlet (0.15): This is the lowest among the independent variables affecting patronage frequency, contributing a 0.15 increase for each unit increase in the outlet's atmosphere.

Standard Error:

The standard error measures the accuracy with which the sample coefficient represents the population coefficient.

Smaller standard errors indicate more precise estimates. Here, all standard errors are relatively small compared to the coefficients, indicating confidence in the estimates.

t-Statistic:

The t-statistic is calculated by dividing each coefficient by its standard error, determining whether the coefficient is significantly different from zero.

All variables have t-statistics well above the usual threshold of 2 (often considered significant), indicating that each independent variable has a significant effect on patronage frequency.

Sig. Level (p-value):

Each of the significance levels shows whether the associated t-statistic is significant.

Values less than 0.05 indicate statistical significance; all independent variables and the intercept are significant at  $p < 0.01$ , showing strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

R and R<sup>2</sup>:

R (0.92) indicates a very high correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

R<sup>2</sup> (0.85) suggests that 85% of the variance in patronage frequency can be explained by the independent variables included in the model.

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>:

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (0.83) accounts for the number of independent variables used and is slightly lower than R<sup>2</sup>, which is typical. This indicates that the model is very effective with the variables included.

F-statistic and Significance of F (Sig. F):

The F-statistic (45.67) tests the overall significance of the regression model, comparing the model with no predictors to the model containing the predictors.

The significance level of F (Sig. F = 0.000) indicates that the model is statistically significant overall, confirming that the independent variables reliably predict patronage frequency.

The regression analysis supports the idea that quality of food, service quality, cultural relevance, price affordability, and atmosphere significantly influence patrons' frequency of visiting Igbo traditional food outlets. The model explains a substantial portion of the variance in patronage frequency, demonstrating the importance of these factors in encouraging consumer behavior in this niche market. Stakeholders in these outlets should focus on improving service quality and food quality to enhance patronage outcomes effectively.

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*Discussion of Findings*

The findings from this study highlight the significant roles that food quality, service quality, cultural relevance, price affordability, and atmosphere of the outlet play in influencing the frequency of patronage at Igbo traditional food outlets. Regression analysis revealed that all independent variables had a positive and statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, patronage frequency, with service quality being the most influential factor (coefficient = 0.35), followed closely by quality of food (coefficient = 0.30).

This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of service quality in hospitality and restaurant settings. For instance, Bitner (1990) asserts that service quality is pivotal in shaping customer experiences and satisfaction, which ultimately drive repeat patronage. The significance of service quality in this context underscores the need for operators of Igbo traditional food outlets to invest in training staff and improving the overall service experience offered to customers. As noted by Zeithaml et al. (1990), consumers often evaluate service quality based on their perceptions of the interaction with service personnel, which significantly affects their overall satisfaction and likelihood of returning.

Food quality also emerged as a critical determinant of patronage frequency consistent with findings from other studies in the restaurant and food service industry. According to Lockshin et al. (2006), the quality of food is a predominant factor for repeat visits and long-term customer loyalty. The positive association between food quality and patronage highlights the necessity for Igbo traditional food outlets to maintain high culinary standards.

The cultural relevance of the food offered was another essential factor influencing patronage frequency. The findings reflect a growing trend where consumers prefer dining experiences that resonate with their cultural identities (Mason, 2004). Traditional food outlets that incorporate culturally significant dishes and dining experiences can foster a strong connection with their customers, thus enhancing frequent patronage.

Price affordability, while significant, was noted to have a slightly lower impact on patronage compared to other variables. This finding echoes the sentiment expressed by Hsu and Miville (2006), who state that while price is a crucial consideration for consumers, it often takes a backseat to quality and experience in determining restaurant choices. This suggests that while competitive pricing remains important, Igbo traditional food outlets should prioritize improving food and service quality over solely focused price competition.

Finally, the atmosphere of the outlet showed a positive correlation with patronage frequency, albeit as the least influential compared to other factors. The ambience of a dining establishment plays a significant role in shaping the overall dining experience (Bitner, 1992). Enhancements to the atmosphere can promote higher levels of customer satisfaction and encourage repeat visits.

The findings of this study affirm the importance of multiple dimensions, notably service quality and food quality, in predicting patronage frequency at Igbo traditional food outlets. As restaurant environments become increasingly competitive, stakeholders must prioritize enhancing these key factors to attract and retain customers effectively.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the factors influencing patronage frequency at Igbo traditional food outlets, identifying key variables such as food quality, service quality, cultural relevance, price affordability, and restaurant atmosphere. The regression analysis indicated that all independent variables significantly impacted patronage frequency, with service quality and food quality emerging as the most influential factors. Specifically, the strong positive coefficients for these variables underscore the necessity for food outlets to maintain high standards in customer service and culinary offerings to attract and retain customers. Additionally, the

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significance of cultural relevance suggests that diners are increasingly seeking dining experiences that resonate with their cultural identities, further enhancing the appeal of traditional food establishments.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that stakeholders in Igbo traditional food outlets prioritize enhancing service and food quality through staff training and maintaining high culinary standards. Moreover, increasing the cultural relevance of menu offerings can create a stronger connection with patrons. While competitive pricing is valuable, emphasizing quality and customer experience should take precedence. Additionally, improving the atmospheric elements of the outlets can significantly augment the overall dining experience, promoting higher levels of customer satisfaction and repeat visits. By adopting these strategies, Igbo traditional food outlets can better position themselves in a competitive market and foster greater patronage.

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