

## **THE EFFECT OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS ON BEHAVIOR OF INTERNATIONAL ETHNIC CUISINE CONSUMERS IN KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Despite the high level of internationalization of ethnic cuisines, it can be observed that they are not served in most common public eating places in Kenya. It is only served in a few special food joints in the rich suburbs of the main towns in Kenya- Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. With globalization and high rate of training in hospitality in Kenya, it is the high time that entrepreneurs focused on this area of business so that those foods are served even in common public hotels in Kenya. This is only possible if enough literature is generated on consumers' behavior towards international cuisines in Kenya. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of consumers' personal factors on the outcome of behavior of international ethnic cuisine consumers in Kenya. From the accessible literature on the studies on consumer behavior of ethnic cuisines in Kenya, there is no study that has investigated the effect of consumers' personal factors on the outcome of behavior of international ethnic cuisine. Based on regression analysis, the primary data collected from a sample of 200 consumers visiting international ethnic hotels in Nairobi. The study found that gender, education, income, occupation (being an office worker or a businessman) and lifestyle (being a global traveller) are significant predictors of the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels. However, age had no significant effect on the outcome of behavior of international ethnic cuisine consumers in regard to number of visits to international ethnic cuisine hotels in Kenya. Based on those findings, entrepreneurs in international ethnic cuisine hotel businesses in Kenyan market must focus on the five consumer personal characteristics when designing marketing strategies. This is mainly in regard to marketing communication programmes, products/service and the pricing.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Cuisines, Customers' Personal Characteristics, Consumer Behavior, Purchasing Behavior

## **1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Consumer behavior is that behavior exhibited by people in planning, purchasing and using economic goods and services (Kibera & Waruingi, 2007). It can also be defined as the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services for the satisfaction of their wants. It manifests itself in regard to: amount bought, choice between available alternative goods/services and the distribution outlets chosen during purchase, time when purchases are made, and how consumers buy (Wambugu, 2015) It is important for marketers to analyze consumer behavior for several reasons, namely: To understand how buyers behave towards a firm's marketing strategy or strategies because this behavior have a great impact on its success: To investigate whether the marketing mix strategy is satisfying the consumers, and to understand the factors that influences consumer behavior in order to be in a better position to predict how consumers will respond to the company's marketing strategy (Kibera & Waruingi, 2007). Thus knowledge of the outcome of consumer behavior is key when marketers are planning and implementing their marketing strategies This is the only way a firm can succeed in increasing product adoption and repeat purchase (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh & Best, 2009).

Studies of customer behavior in Kenya have investigated the behavior of consumers in regard to food stuff such as milk (Wambugu, 2014). In the areas of ethnic cuisines, studies have been done on internationalization of ethnic foods (Wambugu, Lemon & Misic (2002): Kimto, (2010): Ungku, Boo, Sambasivan, & Salleh, (2011) and many others. The analysis of those studies gives an indication that demographic factors influencing consumer behavior towards international cuisines are not yet understood.

Traditional foods of Kenya incorporate a little bit of the exotic - spicy aromas and the delights of coconut milk blend with introduced foods from faraway lands. The history of Kenya and its cuisine are now forever linked. The Kenyan traditional dishes which form the foundation for the cuisine of Kenya are simple and wholesome. In rural areas local ingredients are used to create honest and nutritious meals that are also filling.

The coast people make more exotic the cuisine due to the influence of merchant traders and colonization by foreign countries over many centuries. Traders from the East brought with them Aromatic spices such as cinnamon and cloves, which found their way into Swahili culture (mix race of Arabs and Africans) alongside foods like corn, cassava, cocoyam, pumpkin, tomatoes bananas and pineapples. Another strong influence to still evidence in Kenyan cuisine today has come from India. Indians who settled in Kenya after construction of the first Railway line brought with them the delights of chai (tea) and the art of making samosas and chapattis ([www.kenyasafari.com](http://www.kenyasafari.com), visited July 19, 2016). Since tourism is one of the major sectors in the

Kenyan economy in terms of sales, employment and foreign earnings, attempts have been made to target the tourists in terms of Kenyan traditional cuisines through the gala nights (Kimto, 2010).

Kenyan food is mainly traditional and nearly all of Kenya's tribes boast a specific meal as their very own staple food, and it is readily available in almost every Kenyan eatery. It can be found in restaurants, hotels, clubs and entertainment venues with an African flair. As indicated above, international cuisines are only available in special places, which might not be accessible to most Kenyans. Despite this, little is known concerning factors influencing consumption behavior of Kenyan in regard to international cuisines. In the accessible literature, there is no documented research information regarding consumer behavior towards international ethnic cuisines. It is important that local consumers are investigated in order to understand factors that influence their consumption behavior of international ethnic cuisines. This will generate information that can guide local and international investors in the hotel industry, ([www.kenyasafari.com](http://www.kenyasafari.com)).

Kimto (2010) analyzed perception of tourists towards Kenyan ethnic cuisine. However the analysis did not touch on the Kenyans perception of international cuisines such as Chinese Japanese and Mexican, foods or even the factors influencing the influencing consumption of the ethnic cuisines in the Kenyan market. Thus from the accessible literature, it is not known what factors affect consumers' purchasing behavior for international ethnic cuisines in Kenya. This is despite the fact that hotels and restaurants serving foreign cuisines have been increasing tremendously big cities in Kenya. This has led to increased competition between ethnic cuisines hotels operating in Kenya. Research on factors influencing consumption behavior in regard to international cuisines behavior is therefore necessary in order to generate information that could assist hotel managers when planning their business strategies.

The main objective of a business strategy is to ensure that the business achieves its objectives (mainly maximizing sales, profits and increasing the market share) irrespective of the competitive environment which they are operating in (Wambugu, 2014). Therefore, how organizations design their marketing strategies to achieve the targets is crucial to them. This argument can be extended to ethnic cuisines sector of food industry in Kenya. For players to succeed, they must achieve superior performance, which is only possible if they understand the factors influencing consumption behavior for their customers. This will enable them to align their marketing strategies to consumer needs in order to face the intense competition in this sector. Through this, hotel managers can enhance hotel/restaurants/shops sales outcome and commercial success.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of consumers' personal factors on the outcome of behavior of international ethnic cuisine consumers in Kenya. The outcome in behavior in this study is based on the number of times the consumer has visited international ethnic cuisine hotels and restaurants per year in Kenya.

Specifically, the study aimed at determining the effect of:

- a) Consumers' gender on the number of times a consumer visits international ethnic food hotel/restaurant/shop in Kenya
- b) Consumers' income on the number of times a consumer visits international ethnic food hotel/restaurant/shop in Kenya
- c) Consumers' level of education on the number of times a consumer visits international ethnic food hotel/restaurant/shop in Kenya
- d) Consumers' occupation on the number of times a consumer visits international ethnic food hotel/restaurant/shop in Kenya
- e) Consumers' lifestyle (being a traveller) on the number of times a consumer visits international ethnic food hotel/restaurant/shops in Kenya.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Theoretical Literature*

According to Kibera and Waruingi (2007), some of the important personal factors that influence the buying behavior are: lifestyle, economic situation, occupation, age, personality and self concept.

#### *Age*

Age and life-cycle have potential impact on the consumer buying behavior. It is obvious that the consumers change the purchase of goods and services with the passage of time. Family life-cycle consists of different stages such young singles, married couples, unmarried couples etc which help marketers to develop appropriate products for each stage.

#### *Occupation*

The occupation of a person has significant impact on his buying behavior. For example a marketing manager of an organization will try to purchase business suits, whereas a low level worker in the same organization will purchase rugged work clothes.

#### *Economic Situation*

Consumer economic situation has great influence on his buying behavior. If the income and savings of a customer is high then he will purchase more expensive products. On the other hand, a person with low income and savings will purchase inexpensive products.

#### *Lifestyle*

Lifestyle of customers is another import factor affecting the consumer buying behavior. Lifestyle refers to the way a person lives in a society and is expressed by the things in his/her surroundings. It is determined by customer interests, opinions, activities etc and shapes his whole pattern of acting and interacting in the world.

#### *Empirical Literature*

International cuisines are available in fast-food restaurants, cafés, hotels and world-class specialty restaurants across the major cities of Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret and Kisumu. They include Italian, American, Indian, Chinese, Thai, Japanese, European, French, Mexican, Korean, Lebanese and other western cuisines. The world-famous and one-of-a kind game meat restaurant in Africa - the Carnivore - is popular for its tasty selection of wildlife game meat. At the Carnivore restaurant in Nairobi, Kenya, you can savor bountiful meals of antelope, crocodile, gazelle and other wild meat. There are enough choices of food to delight vegetarians, too ([www.kenyasafari.com](http://www.kenyasafari.com)).

However, even with this interesting development in the ethnic food business in Kenya, no study has investigated the factors that influence consumer behavior towards international cuisines. The only accessible literature is on local cuisines by Kimto, (2010), who investigated tourists' perceptions of the Kenyan ethnic Cuisine. Thus, there is need to investigate the factors influencing behavior of consumers of international ethnic cuisines in Kenya.

In the developed world, a lot of research has been done on international cuisines. For example, Wambugu, Lemon & Misis (2002), analyzed the existing environment in the Swedish market for ethnic cuisines, but the factors influencing the internationalization of ethnic foods did not come out clearly, because this study focused on the ethnic foods industry internationalization strategy, and the existing macro-environment variables in the Swedish market.

Louise, Omar, Aramarat, Christine (2012) investigated consumer perceptions on the food safety in Asian and Mexican restaurants. The study found that Mexican restaurants in US scored higher in food safety confidence than Asian restaurants and that food safety is an underlying factor in international ethnic food restaurant selection.

Ungku, Boo, Sambasivan, & Salleh, (2011) investigated foodservice hygiene factors, and they argued that, management and workers in international ethnic restaurants in USA have prior cultural understanding of ethnic food preparation.

Abu-Saad, Shahar, Vardi & Fraser (2010) investigated the role of ethnic foods as predictors of intake levels of selected nutrients that are important during pregnancy among the Bedouin Arab minority population in southern Israel. They also compared the main food predictors for Bedouin intakes of the selected nutrients with those for the region's Jewish majority population. The results of this study indicated that, over 80% of the BNS between-person variability in the intake of all selected nutrients was explained by 34 food groups, of which 13 (38.2%) were ethnic foods. Homemade whole wheat bread was a main predictor of intake levels for five of the eight selected nutrients, and other ethnic foods/recipes (for example, za'atar, leafy dark green vegetables and camel milk) emerged as predictors of iron, folate, calcium and  $\omega$ -3 fatty acid intakes. Breads explained 60 and 44% of the between-person variation and 38 and 36% of the total intakes of iron and zinc intakes in the BNS sample, respectively, whereas for the Jewish population, animal sources and fortified foods predominated as main predictors and contributors of these nutrients. Based on their findings, they came to a conclusion that, addition of ethnic foods to food composition databases is important to the consumers.

Louise, Omar, Aramarat & Christine (2012), investigated consumer perceptions on food safety in Asian and Mexican cuisines restaurants. The results indicated that consumers had higher confidence of food safety for Mexican cuisines than for Asian foods, and that food safety is an underlying factor in Ethnic food restaurant selection.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study was based on the primary data collected from consumers visiting international ethnic hotels in Nairobi's CBD. The sample was randomly selected and it comprised of 200 consumers. Four personal variables – age, income, occupation, education and lifestyle (being a traveller) were included in the study. The following multiple regression model was constructed to find out whether there is any significant relationship between the amount of milk bought by shoppers and their situations during a particular shopping activity and the perceived importance for packaging characteristics. The specified multiple regression model was estimated using the method of

ordinary least squares. This model is appropriate because in this study, the dependent variable (amount of milk purchased in litres) is continuous. The model is presented as follows:

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_{1i} + \alpha_2 X_{2i} + \alpha_3 X_{3i} + \alpha_4 X_{4i} + \alpha_5 X_{5i} + u_i$$

Where:  $Y$  = number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels/restaurants,  $\alpha_0$  = constant term.  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_5$  are unknown parameters associated with changing patterns of the explanatory variables which must be estimated. The explanatory variables are:  $X_1$  = age,  $X_2$  = income,  $X_3$  = education,  $X_4$  = occupation,  $X_5$  = gender and  $X_6$  = lifestyle. The variables specified as follows:

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>How obtained</b>	<b>Description</b>
$X_1$ = age	Respondents indicated their age	Number of years
$X_2$ = Monthly Income	Respondents indicated their income	Amount in Kenya Shillings
$X_3$ = education	Respondents indicated their level of education	Number of years spent in school
$X_4$ = occupation	Respondents indicated their occupation	occupation = 1 if the consumer is office worker and business man; Occupation = 0 if the respondent is not an office worker
$X_5$ = Gender	Respondents indicated their gender	Gender = 1 if the respondent is male and gender = 0 if the shopper had no companionship
$X_6$ = Life style	Respondents indicated their lifestyles	lifestyle = 1 if the respondent is global traveller and lifestyle = 0 if the respondent is not a global traveller

**4.0 RESULTS**

**Table 1: Respondents' Profile**

	Frequency	N =1000 Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	65	32.5
Female	135	67.5
Age		
Over 50 years	40	20
41-50 years	60	30
32-40 years	75	37.5
21-30 years	25	12.5
Income		
Ksh 40,000 & above	70	35
Ksh 30,000-39,000	75	37.5
KSh 20,000-29,000	30	15
Ksh 10,000- 19,000	15	7.5
Below 10,000	10	5
Education		
Above secondary	90	45
Secondary level	60	30
Primary level	30	15

The results indicates that out of 200 respondents, 135 (67.5 %) were male, and 175 of the respondents were 40 and above years old. 175 67.5 % respondents earned Ksh 29,000 and above, while 150 out of 200 respondents had attained secondary school level of education and above.

**Table 4.7 Frequency of Purchase of International Cuisines in the Sampled Hotels**

	Frequency	%
Bought once	14	7
Weekly	95	47.5
Monthly	72	36
Once in every 3 months	19	9.5

Results in table 4.7 indicate that 83.5% of the consumers visit international hotels weekly and monthly. Only 7% of the consumers indicated that they have consumed international cuisines only once in their lifetime.

**Table 4.8: Regression Results: Effect of Demographic Factors on the ethnic cuisine buying behavior**

Linear	Regression	Number of obs	=	200
		F( 4, 201)	=	442.84
		Prob > F	=	0
		R-squared	=	0.810
		Adj R-Squared		0.809
		Root MSE	=	0.40227
	Coef	Std.Err	t	P>t
Gender	0.240	0.025	9.76	0.000
Age	0.001	0.002	-0.22	0.828
Education	0.800	0.006	-1.25	0.000
Lifestyle (being a global traveller)	0.240	0.014	2.66	0.008
Occupation (office worker/Business man)	0.221	0.000	-1.15	0.000
Income	0.400	0.0000	1.31	0.000
_cons	1.2004	0.0961	10.49	0.000

The results above indicate that, R-squared is equal to 0.801 while adjusted R-squared is equal to 0.799. This implies that there is high degree of goodness of fit of the regression model. It also means that over 80% of variation in the dependent variable (the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels) can be explained by the regression model. The F test result was F (8, 201) 442.84, with a significance of 0.000. Consequently, the hypothesis that all regression coefficients in the model are zero is rejected. Therefore, a significant relationship was present between the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels) and the explanatory variables in the regression model. RMSE which is the square root of the variance of the residuals or the standard deviation of the unexplained variation was 0.402. This was low given that it is below 0.500, which was an indication that there is high degree of goodness of fit of the regression model.

According to the findings, gender is a significant predictor of the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels (coefficient = 0.240, p-value = 0.000). This implied that, number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels is expected to be higher by 0.240 times for male consumers of ethnic foods than for female consumers. Age had positive an insignificant effect on the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels (coefficient = 0.001, p-value = 0.828). This implies that, holding other things constant, number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels is expected to be higher by 0.001 times if the age of shoppers increased by one year. Similarly, education had a positive and significant effect

on number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels coefficient = 0.800, p-value = 0.000). This implies that, holding other things constant, number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels) is expected to be higher by 0.008 times if the level of education of shoppers increased by one year. Income of the consumer had a positive and significant effect on the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels (coefficient = 0.400, p-value = 0.000). This implies that, holding other things constant, number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels is expected to be higher by 0.4 times if the income of shoppers increased by one Shilling.

Occupation (being an office worker or a business man) is a significant predictor of the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels (coefficient = 0.221, p-value = 0.000). This implied that, number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels is expected to be higher by 0.24 times for office workers or businessmen consumers of ethnic foods than for consumers in other occupations.

Further, the results indicate that lifestyle (being a global traveller) is a significant predictor of the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels (coefficient = 0.240, p-value = 0.008). This implied that, number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels is expected to be higher by 0.240 times for office workers consumers of ethnic foods than for non –office/business people.

On other hand, consumers' life style (being a global traveller) has a positive and significant effect on the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels (coefficient = 0.038, p-value = 0.008). This implies that, holding other things constant, the number of visits to ethnic cuisine hotels is expected to be higher by 0.038 times for consumers of ethnic foods who are global travellers than for non-global travellers.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Most consumers visit international ethnic cuisines at least once a week or on monthly basis. Given the growing rate of urbanization in Kenya, this rate of visits to those hotels is a good indicator to the entrepreneurs who may be interested in investing in international cuisine hotel business.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that all consumer's personal characteristics except for age are strong predictors of consumer buying behavior in regard to international ethnic cuisine. Based on those findings, in order for international ethnic cuisine hotels to succeed in Kenyan market, they must focus on consumer personal characteristics when designing marketing strategies. For Instance, when designing marketing communication programs, managers of international ethnic hotels should bear the effects of those factors in their mind. The selection of the marketing appeals should consider the five personal characteristics. This also applies products/service design and price determination.

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