

Impact of Interior Design on Customers' Patronage in Eateries: Case Study of Selected Eateries in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

*¹Audu Abel Panni, ²Silas Fxenterimam Akaten, ³Saliu Hassan Ozovehe

^{1,2,3}Department of Architecture,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Email: auduabelpanni@gmail.com

Abstract

Interior design is the art and science of enhancing/planning the layout and furnishing of the inner section of the building, to achieve a healthier and more aesthetically pleasing environment for the end user. Interior design element includes: Colour, Furniture, Layout, Lighting, Ventilation, Wall design, Music, Nature, Equipment, and Informative Graphics. This study is aimed at evaluating the impact of interior design on customers' patronage in eateries. The methodology employed involves descriptive analysis, 121 questionnaires were distributed among students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in two (2) selected eateries. The data obtained was analysed to rank features obtained from literature and pre-survey visits. Findings from the study indicate that interior design is the second most important factor after the quality of food that determines customers' patronage to eateries. The study also established that colour/aesthetics, furniture and spatial layout are the most important interior design parameters in eateries. The study concluded and recommends that proper interior design not only attracts customers but also retain them. Hence, designers should make it a priority when designing eateries.

Keywords: Ahmadu Bello University, Customers, Eateries, Interior Design, Patronage

INTRODUCTION

In today's eatery market, an entrepreneur has to be innovative and stand out from what market has to offer, and to be able to do so, it have to provide not only good products and service, but also a unique dinning environment to contribute to the overall customer satisfaction. According to the study on atmospheric elements, Countryman & Jang (2006) opined that the effect of atmospheric elements on customer impression comes from what surrounds people, elements such as furniture, colours, materials, walls, windows and doors; it's the live at home, work, school, shops, eateries, hospital buildings and everything we use. What people see from errors or positive things around, all have affects whether positively or negatively, it further emphasized that the value of interior design extends into all business sectors and it is an economic advantage to clients. Furthermore, it has been reported by

*Author for Correspondence

Office Design Team (2017) that the interior spaces of a corporate office serve as an extension of a company's values and identity. These interiors translate into customer loyalty and brand recognition that enhance business success.

Eateries are places people go to eat according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018). Eateries are classified under commercial buildings as it is also a place where business activities take place. Putting into view what Vitruvius said about form following function meaning a building form should be derived from the function of the building, the interior of an eatery should have a positive effect on the performance of the building users covering the functional aspect first. The effect of interior design on eateries may be worth an emphasis as its effect on customers patronage and performance of workers cannot be overlooked.

Interior Design: Interior design according to American Heritage Dictionary (2018) is the art of planning the decoration of the inside of a building such as a house, business places or an office. National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) (2016) said interior design is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built environment. An interior designer is someone who plans, researches, coordinates, and manages such projects. Interior design is a multifaceted profession that includes conceptual development, space planning, site inspections, programming, research, communicating with the stakeholders of a project, construction management, and execution of the work.

Physical environment of the restaurant has a great influence on the image of the eatery and can act positively or negatively for the customer perception of the eatery's image, but the physical environment is not significant in the customer perceived value. Interior design in eateries should then create unique experience or emotion for the customer and make him want to come back, as for the design in store can be oriented to "enhance the purchase probability". Atmosphere of the place is created out of customers four senses, visual, tactile, olfactory and aural and it is determined by the colour, temperature, scent, music, light etc. Taste as a fifth sense is excluded from the atmosphere definition because it is directly affected by the meal, or the core restaurant product (Kotler, 1973).

Discussed below are factors of interior design that affects customers' patronage in eateries:

Space and layout: Arrangements and circulation system done inside the eatery is also one of the basic elements of interior design in an eatery especially the arrangement of the seating positions which can either make the customers comfortable or inconvenience them. Bitner, (2002) stated that spatial layout refers to the ways in which machinery, equipment, and furnishings are arranged, the size and shape of those items, and the spatial relationships among them, with functionality indicating the ability of those items to facilitate performance and the accomplishment of goals, this finding was also confirmed from the study carried out by Omar, Ariffin and Ahmad (2014). A layout may have a direct effect on consumer's quality perceptions, pleasure, and excitement levels, and an indirect effect on the desire to return according to Arriffin, Bibon and Abdulah (2011); Muhammad (2014). For example, the locations of tables in restaurants have a tremendous influence on the overall experience of a customer. Table placement can transmit a sense of privacy, portray the functionality desired, and operate as boundary for the customer from the observation of Lin and Jang (2009). Signs, symbols, and artefacts, which include signage, personal artefacts, decor, and other physical elements that serve as explicit or implicit signals that communicate with users are also considered part of the layout in the interior design of an eatery Bitner, (2002).

Colour: Colour perception relates to emotions and can vary from trend, culture or gender, so for example men tend to tolerate neutral colours better than females. Red and yellow are the

most popular colour choices among fast food eateries because they apparently attract customer attention and stimulate their appetite (Singh, 2006). Even though blue is shown to have decreasing effect on customer appetite, formal restaurants tend to use it often because it has a calm effect and is shown to be relaxing restaurant customers and bringing them in state of comfort and satisfaction. Colour also has influence on waiting time, so with blue colour time is seemingly passing quicker, while with red colour time seems to be passing slower (Singh, 2006). Colour shapes environments and creates specific feelings or attitudes. Red, for example, is an emotionally intense colour, while blue is calming and peaceful. When selecting environmental colours, consider the activities occurring in each space.

Rather than using colour as an accent only, painting an entire space creates an overall environment and most times says much more than words can say. This approach is most successful when using colours with a mid-range level of saturation, as opposed to brighter colours, which over an extended period can be visually exhausting or even agitating.

Music: Music can be classified also as a part of the interior design of a place because it has a great effect on the interior of the place it is being used in. Shields, (2006) stated that the music and interior layout have great influence on revenue in the small business eatery which backs up the study about music being a part of interior design of an eatery. According to his research increase in music tempo and volume can affect business by increasing the number of tables turns and decreasing meal duration. By adjusting the interior layout and music according to the eatery image, the revenues of the restaurant can be increased but the management must adopt the perspective of the customer and employees, and test attributes of the atmospherics. Slow music on the other hand has positive affect and can increase customer's willingness to buy and spend money as shown in the study by Mariya, Vanda and Jasminka (2018).

Ambient light: As Walter and Edvardsson (2012) stated in their research, in the physical environment there are present "one-sided unfavorable drivers" meaning that the elements that are missing from the physical environment are perceived as negative experience while present in the environment those elements rarely or never create extreme positive experience, for example bad lighting will be noticed and mentioned as a complaint but a good lighting will rarely be mentioned as a compliment from customers review. According to the Shields (2006) there were indications that brighter lights can decrease range of meal duration.

Aesthetics. If the restaurant owner wants to redesign the facility it should first communicate with the customer and research on its wants and recommendations on aesthetics (the wall decor, paintings/pictures, furniture, flooring/carpeting, etc.) of the restaurant because the customers are eventually the ones that are directly influenced with those decisions (Ryu & Han, 2011). Also, it is stated that the results of the assessing the customer opinion on the aesthetics of the restaurant can differentiate depending on the new or repeat customer or time period of the previous design that was implemented in the restaurant. Overall satisfaction affects the customer loyalty and repeat customers. Also, aesthetics does not only increase loyalty in the existing customers but also can be a positive experience that will attract new customers and increase revenues (Ryu & Han, 2011). More frequent driver was interior design both in favourable and unfavourable experiences, than the exterior (Walter & Edvardsson, 2012).

Research done in middle and upscale full-service restaurants show that the attractive atmosphere can be a tool for the managers to use in a marketing strategy for the restaurant. The study had shown that the tangible parts of the atmospherics, more exactly the aesthetics

of the restaurant and employees that were part of the dining experience are more significant to the customers than the intangible factors, like lighting, colours or music, for which the customers are not willing to pay more money (Mariya, Vanda and Jasminka, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

While previous studies tested on overall factors that affect customers in restaurant industry, this research was done to focus and test only specific factors of the interior design in restaurants. Purpose of this descriptive research was to access and rank interior design factors in eateries according to their importance to customers' satisfaction. 121 questionnaires were distributed and retrieved through face to face distribution of which 62 were in season 21 and 59 in Frizzlers.

Case Study

The selected case studies for this study are Frizzlers and Season 21 eateries both located in social Centre of Samaru Main Campus of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Kaduna state. The selection criteria for the case study are locating accessible eateries with same location in order to avoid difference in sales due to location as this study is set out to find out the difference due to the interior design.

Case Study One: The Frizzlers

Frizzlers is an eatery located inside the social centre of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Samaru, main campus. The eatery contains three basic sections which comprises of the kitchen, hidden from public (customers') view, the service-cafe, which serves as the order placement zone and the customers' seats. It is bounded by its north and south by two shops and by it west and south a parking lot and a courtyard respectively. The shops bounding the eatery is a photo studio and a soft drink shop which basically supplies the soft drinks and drinking water used in the eatery. The entrance is accessible from the courtyard in the social Centre. The figures below explain this further.

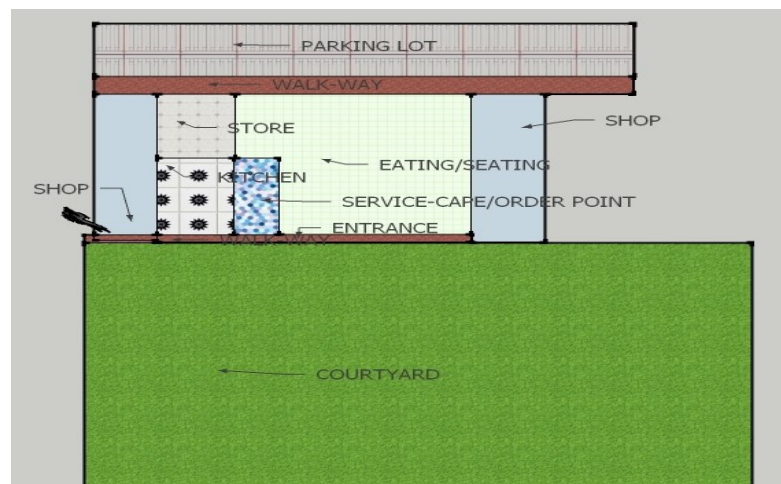


Figure 1: Plan on Site of Frizzlers, Social Centre, Samaru campus, A.B.U., Zaria



Plate1: Approach View of the Eatery



Plate2: Eatery's Serving Position



Seating Position and Arrangement



Plate4: Seating Position and Arrangement

Case Study Two: Season 21 Eatery

The second case study is Season 21 eatery also located in Social Centre of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Samaru, Main Campus. The eatery contains three basic sections which comprises of the kitchen, hidden from public (customers') view, the service-cape, which serves as the order placement zone and then the customers' seats. It is bounded by its north and south by two shops and by its west and south a walkway and a courtyard respectively. It is directly opposite the Frizzlers eatery with a large courtyard in between them.

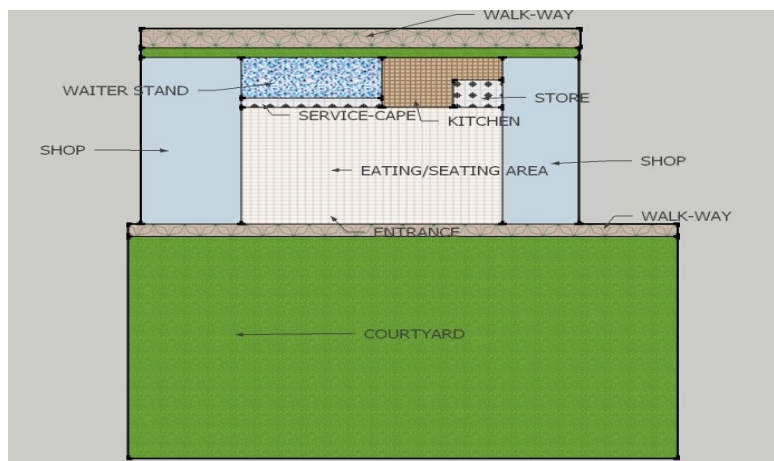


Figure2: Plan on Site of Season 21 Eatery, Social Centre, Samaru Campus, A.B.U., Zaria.



Plate5: Approach View of Season 21 Eatery



Plate6: Eatery's Serving Position



Plate7: Seating Position, Arrangement and colour



Plate8: Seating Position, Arrangement and colour

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results obtained from the survey of the questionnaire indicated that 58% (70) of the respondents are Male while 42% (51) of the respondents are female. As of Age Range; the survey also shows that 35.5% (43) respondents are Age range 16–20yrs, 33.9% (41) respondents are between 20–25yrs, 18.2% (18) respondents are between 26–30yrs while 12.4% (15) respondents are 31 and above (13). As of Occupation; 86% (104) are Student while 14% (17) are Non-Student. As of Marital Status 82.6% (100) are Single while 17.4 (21) are Married. Most respondents visit the eatery regularly.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	70	57.9
	Female	51	42.1
Age Range	16 - 20	43	35.5
	20 - 25	41	33.9
	26 - 30	22	18.2
	31 Above	15	12.4
Occupation	Student	104	86.0
	Non-Student	17	14.0
Marital Status	Single	100	82.6
	Married	21	17.4
Frequency of Visit	Often	86	71.1
	Neutral	23	19.0
	Rarely	12	9.9

From the questionnaire distributed, the survey reveals that the factors affecting customer's choice of eatery are ranked as follows: Food (48 Respondents), Interior Design (40 Respondents), Price (14 Respondents), Customer's Service (9 Respondents), Location (7 Respondents) and 3 Respondents of the questionnaires were missing. This shows that among these several factors food and interior design are the most desire factors when setting up a eatery because it affects both customer's patronage and profit margin of the eateries.

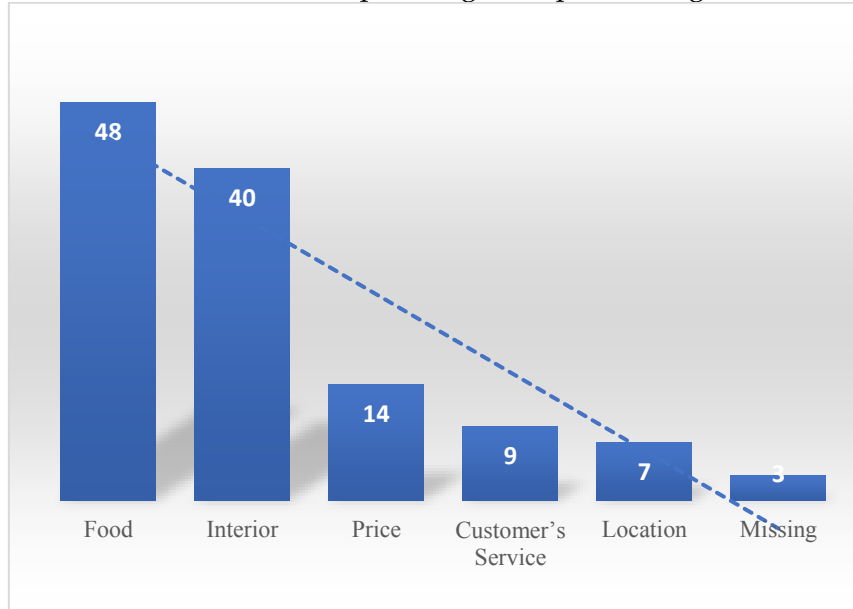


Figure3: Factors affecting customers' choice of eatery

Table 2 shows the ranking of the interior design factors according to their significance in eateries as obtained for the survey. The ranking shows that colour/ Aesthetics (Mean 5.64, S.D. 1.24); Furniture design/comfort (Mean 5.49, S.D. 1.22) Spatial layout (Mean 5.27, SD 1.04) as the most important interior design factors.

Table 2: Ranking of interior design factors in eateries

VARIABLES (FACTORS)	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Colour/Aesthetics	5.64	0.91
Furniture design/comfort	5.49	0.90
Spatial layout	5.27	0.85
Sufficient lighting	4.86	0.83
Ventilation system	4.74	0.79
Wall design	4.69	0.77
Art importance	4.63	0.78
Music style/type/volume	4.28	0.75
Design of glasses	4.05	0.72
Design of plates	3.20	0.68
Good view to nature	2.32	0.67
Informative graphics	1.52	0.65

Finally, when the mean value for each category of space and factors affecting the space design were calculated, it showed spaces with serious interior facilities would affect

performance the most in a positive way and would do better in their performance with increased level of individualization in the eatery.

DISCUSSION

It is quite interesting to note that both eateries with different customers and workers working in different interior spaces would be affected based on the interior spaces inasmuch as the food quality provided are to standard. This shows that for these two factors (food quality and interior design), to be neglected will have a negative outcome for an eatery running for commercial purposes. Though the main aim of this research is to investigate how the interior of an eatery can affect the customer's choice of patronage in eateries.

As opined by Marija et al(2018), this research agrees that Aesthetics, furniture and spatial layout are the major interior factors that affect eatery's patronage. This paper also agrees with Omar et al (2014) with regards to interior design been the second most important factor affecting the patronage of eateries.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been established that the interior design of an eatery which includes the spaces provided and the design factors/considerations affects customers choice of eatery and should be duly considered when planning to set up or design an eatery for commercial and even when it's just for comfort purposes. From the result it was established that all the necessary spaces and arrangements are important having facilities such as service cape electrical supply for personal use too as these can affect customers choice of patronage which in turn directly determines the profit turn out. This also evidently implies that if workers are not at ease in their workplace either from health challenges, due to discomfort or been press they can hardly concentrate at work, hence affecting their performance. It was very interesting to find out that instructional spaces including attendants' spaces, offices, kitchens in this case would readily affect workers performance (See fig.4 and fig.9).

Finally the result of this research on how interior design of eateries affects the sales rate which is the customers patronage and workers performance, the literature review, case studies and interviews reveals that proper and comfortable interior spaces yields better results, therefore the interior design should be a special factor to put into consideration when designing commercial buildings especially eateries.

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