

ASSESSMENT OF USER'S PERCEPTION OF OUTDOOR EATING AREA IN ABUJA RESTAURANTS

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Outdoor eating refers to an extension of indoor seating area where people sit and take their meals in a conducive open atmosphere. It is generally located on the footpath mostly in front of a restaurant and adds to the appeal of the environment as a tourist destination. There is no better indication that a restaurant is more open for business than when it makes good use of adjacent footpaths for outdoor eating. Sadly, most restaurants in Abuja tend to neglect the use of outdoor dining spaces. This paper therefore examines the user's perception of the outdoor eating area in Abuja restaurants. The Study used structured questionnaire and observation schedule to elicit relevant information among Two Hundred and Eighty-Three (283) users who dine at Twenty-Eight (28) different restaurants located in different parts of Abuja. The result indicates that the majority of the users perceives outdoor eating as a way of eating in a free natural environment without the psychology of sitting in an enclosed space. The study hereby suggests the incorporation of the outdoor eating area in the design and construction of restaurants in Abuja.

Keywords: Outdoor eating area, Restaurants, Environment, Enclosed space, Design

INTRODUCTION

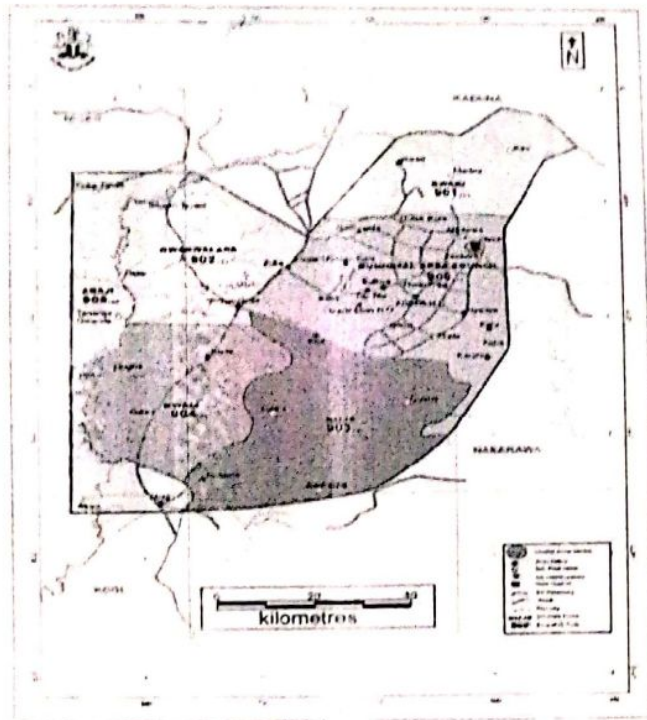
Outdoor dining area refers to the extension of indoor dining spaces in restaurants where people sit to eat, drink, unwind and socialize, located mostly in the front or side of a restaurant Hartman (2015). Restaurants, on the other hand, are organizations that exist in every part of the world. It is a place for people to come socialize, drink and eat and it's credited to the French revolution (Lorri, 2012). Outdoor dining is becoming more popular in some part of the world; it adds to the appeal of the environment as a tourist destination. Outdoor dining spaces add colour, vibrancy and activity to the street frontages and public place. The use of outdoor dining spaces in restaurants cannot be over emphasized; unfortunately, most restaurants in the Federal Capital City of Nigeria tend to neglect the use of outdoor spaces. This paper examines the user perception of the outdoor eating area in Abuja restaurants. To achieve this the paper, evaluate users' perception of what makes the outdoor dining spaces, convenient for use and to assess facilities that make up the outdoor dining spaces. Similarly, the study tends to provide recommendation to the research with regards to the effective use of outdoor dining spaces in restaurants as an extension of the indoor dining areas.

The Study Area

The study area is Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria located between longitude 7.4913 and latitude 9.0722 (Fig. 1). It has an estimated population of 776 298 people according to the 2006 census figures. Bounded by Kaduna State to the North, Nasarawa to the east, Kogi to the South and Niger to the West.

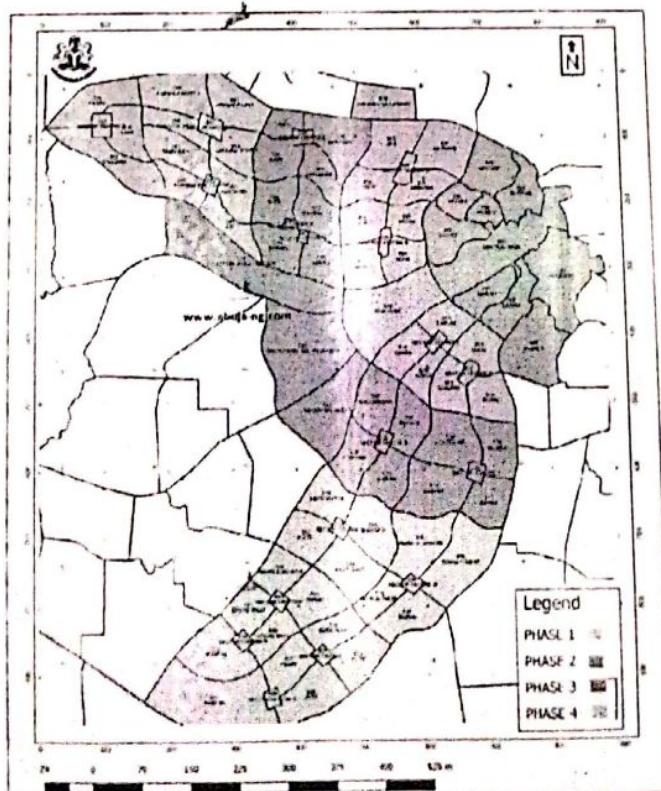
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The estimated known population of the FCT as at 2015 is 2,440,200. By 2018 the population of Abuja at +13.91% rate is 3,607,066 (National Population Commission).



Map of the Federal Capital Territory showing the Federal Capital City
Source: www.abuja-ng.com

The Federal Capital Territory has six (6) area councils, Abuja, the federal capital city is further divided into districts, and the districts are grouped into development phases; There is phase 1, phase 2, phase 3 and phase 4 (see Fig 2). Each phase is divided into districts and cadastral zones. Phase 1 with the exception of Guzape is fully developed with infrastructure and they include; Asokoro, Central Business District, Garki I, Garki II, Maitama, Wuse and Wuse II District. Phase 2 is highly developed and others are being developed, they include; Gudu, Durumi, Utako, Jabi, Wuye, Kado, Mabuchi, Katampe, Jahi, Dakibiyu, Kaura, Duboyi, and Gaduwa.



Map of Abuja showing the Cadastral Zones and District
Source: www.abuja-ng.com

With the high population of people across the FCT and the high infrastructural drive of the government, many restaurants are being opened across the developed district with high commercial activities. (Obateru, 1995) and The aforementioned formed the study area for the distribution of the research questionnaire.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

A sample frame of different restaurants from 7 cadastral zones of Phase 1 and Phase 2 with high commercial activities was randomly selected, these districts include, Asokoro, Maitama, Wuse, Wuse II, Garki, Garki II, Central Business District and Jabi. This was achieved with the use of Stratified Sampling Technique. This is simply a probability sampling technique wherein the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups, then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. This technique aided in the breakdown for the selection of restaurants in the study area. As a result, the sample population was broken down into the existing restaurant in each commercial district that make up the Phase 1 and 2 of the Federal Capital territory. Summarily a total of Twenty-Eight (28) restaurants (Table 1) was randomly selected for this study. An average of 30 diners at peak period was use for the sample. In summary, the total population of diners in the restaurants under this study stands at 840 and consequently forms the study population.

Table 1: Name and Address of studied restaurant

S/NO	NAME OF RESTAURANT	LOCATION
1	Blu Cabana Restaurant	Across Setraco Building, Mabushi
2	Serendib Restaurants	No 29, Umaru Dikki street, Jabi
3	Bukka Restaurants	1 Aguyii Ironsi Str, Maitama
4	Secret Garden	Opp Harrow Park/Abia House, Wuse II
5	Al Basha Palace	No 11 Cassandra Str, off Gana Street, Maitama
6	The Clubhouse	11 Aliyu Moh'd Rd, Jabi, Life Camp,
7	Traffic Restaurants	39 Gana Street, Maitama
8	Salamander Café'	Bujumbura street, Garki, Abuja
9	Zander's Place	Plot 150 F.H.A Phase 1, Karu
10	Classic Rock Coffee	12B Ajesa Street, Wuse II, Abuja
11	Wakkis	Plot 171, Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse II
12	Nkoyo Restaurant	K-City Plaza, Wuse II
13	Jevinik Restaurants	Opp Rita Lori, Garki II
14	Flamingo Restaurants	Ahmadu Bello Way, Before Next Store
15	Kilimanjaro	Gana Street, Maitama
16	Matsala Wahala	1 Agunyii Ironsi Str, Maitama
17	Charcoal Grill and Restaurants	112, Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse II
18	Steakhouse and Lounge	38 Osun Crescent, off IBB Way.
19	City view Restaurants	Plot 2407, IBB Way, Wuse Zone 4
20	Domino and Coldstone	35 Kumasi Crescent, Wuse
21	Drumsticks	Close to AYA, Asokoro
22	House Cuisine	Queen Elizabeth St, Asokoro
23	Sawadee Oriental Cuisine	Central Business District, Silverbird Galleria
24	Fulani Pool Restaurants	Opp Sheraton, Zone 4
25	Chicken Capitol	Central Business District
26	Spice Platter	Close to NTA, CBD
27	Obudu Grill House	Before Pope John Paul, Asokoro
28	Chez Victor	Alex Ekwueme Str, Jabi

In addition, Questionnaire and Observation Schedule was used as research instruments to gather relevant data. The observation schedule was used to obtain general design consideration and features that make up the restaurants. While the questionnaire was administered to respondents to obtain their perception and level of satisfaction on provisions of outdoor dining spaces in the respective restaurants under this study. A total of 283 questionnaires were administered to respondents from the randomly selected restaurants. The total response rate of 76.6% was generated. The data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics and the results was presented in tables, charts and plates. Table 2 shows

the summary of the administered questionnaire that was collated and analysed using descriptive frequency.

Total Population = 840

Sample Size = 283 (sample size Calculator by relief applications)

Table 2: Breakdown of Administered Questionnaires

Respondents	Frequency
Valid Response	217
Invalid Response	30
Not Returned	36
Total	283

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discussions of results in this section are generated from analysis of the data collated from the field survey on assessment of user's perception of the outdoor eating area in Abuja restaurants in the study area. Structured questionnaire was administered to outdoor users to ascertain the user's perception on the importance of different outdoor spaces required by the diners within each restaurant surveyed. Questionnaire was used to collate data for level of importance of existing outdoor dining spaces in the studied restaurant. This is done to ascertain the level of satisfaction of outdoor dining users in the studied restaurant. Table 3 shows the variables that were examined. The degree of importance was obtained using a four point Likert Scale ranging from

Very Unimportant (VU)= 1

Unimportant (UI) = 2

Important (I) = 3

Very Important = 4

Table 3: Variables of Outdoor Dining Spaces

Access to Outdoor Dining space
Location of Outdoor Dining Area
Size and Form of Outdoor Dining Area
Seating Arrangement
Landscaping Features
Quality of Outdoor Dining Space in Restaurant
Safety of Outdoor Dining space
Aesthetics of Outdoor Dining area

Table 4: Respondent Opinion on Importance of Outdoor Dining Space

OPINION	Very Unimportant (VU)	Unimportant (U)	Important (I)	Very Important (VI)	Total
Accessibility	45	82	74	16	217
Location	32	41	59	85	217
Size	97	65	38	17	217
Seating Arrangement	24	69	53	71	217
Landscape features	17	34	93	73	217
Quality of space	42	24	88	63	217
Safety	14	17	105	81	217
Aesthetics	27	67	88	35	217

Table 5: Sum Of Respondents Of Importance Of Outdoor Dining Space

OPINION	(VU) X1	(U) X2	(I) X3	(VI) X4	TOTAL
Accessibility	45	164	222	64	495
Location	32	82	118	340	572
Size	97	130	114	68	409
Seating Arrangement	24	138	159	284	605
Landscape features	17	68	279	292	656
Quality of space	42	48	264	252	606
Safety	14	34	315	324	687
Aesthetics	27	134	264	140	565

The analysis of respondent's user's perception of outdoor dining area in restaurants among outdoor users was conducted. The values obtained from the Likert rated variables of outdoor dining area elements was used to determine the degree of importance using the formulae

$$\text{Total Value (TV)} = n \times \text{LV} \quad (1) \text{ (According to Abdurrahman 2015)}$$

Where TV is the total value of the rated variables

n, is the number of respondents

LV, is the Likert range value

And the formulae

$$\text{Mean Score, } N = \text{LV}/217 \quad (2)$$

Where N is the mean score of Likert rated variables

The equation (1) is used to evaluate the mean score of the rated Likert variables of the responses obtained from the people about their perception of outdoor dining area in Abuja restaurant. The equation (2) is used to evaluate the mean of the score of the Likert rated variables and used to get the range of the Likert scale.

Table 6: Sum of Results Interpretation

Measured Variable	Number Of Respondents	Sum	Mean	Interpretation
Size	217	409	1.88	Unimportant
Accessibility	217	495	2.28	Unimportant
Aesthetics	217	565	2.60	Important
Location	217	572	2.64	Important
Seating Arrangement	217	605	2.79	Important
Quality of space	217	606	2.79	Important
Landscape features	217	656	3.02	Important
Safety	217	687	3.16	Important

Table 6 observed that respondent's opinion on the measured variables; size and accessibility are unimportant to the users of outdoor dining spaces. This is simply deduced based on the ranking from the table that is 1.88 and 2.88 as unimportant. Therefore, it can now be concluded that the variables highlighted have less significance to the design of the restaurant in general. In addition, from the table above shows a strong level of importance for the variables measured within the range of 2.60 to 3.16. These variables are Aesthetics, Location, Seating arrangement, quality of space, landscape features and safety of outdoor dining users are considered important to the respondents and consequently perceived by the outdoor users as a prerequisite in the design of outdoor dining area.

Quality of Outdoor Dining Area

A key factor in user perception of outdoor dining spaces is the quality of outdoor dining area. However, there is a need to make analysis on the data generate on the quality of outdoor dining area in Abuja restaurant. Figure 3 shows the respondent opinion on quality of outdoor dining area within the study area. It can be observed from figure 3 that 29% and 41% are satisfied with the quality of outdoor dining area while 19% and 11% are unsatisfied respectively. The reason for such satisfaction is that most diners prefers the outdoor form of eating and this subsequently led to the high percentage of satisfaction derived on the quality of the spaces from the analysis and data generated.

Quality of Space in Outdoor Dining Area

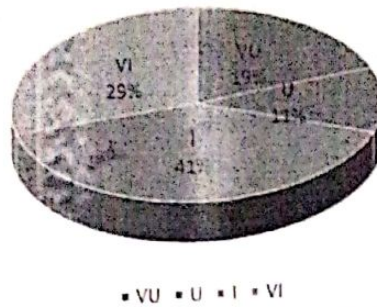


Fig 3: Respondent Opinion on Quality of outdoor dining area
Source: Author's Fieldwork

CONCLUSION

To this end, the outdoor dining spaces are essential factors to be considered in the design of a restaurant. This is because most diners prefer the outdoor form of eating in a free natural environment without the psychology of sitting in an enclosed space and if these spaces are not provided, it can affect the viability and comfortability of the restaurant business that may consequently bring about underutilization of the facilities as a whole. Similarly, the study identified the important spaces that affect the level of usage of outdoor dining spaces based on respondent perception. It can now be recommended that in the design of restaurant, firstly, aesthetics is a vital element that should be given good consideration, secondly the nature of seating arrangement and outdoor space configuration should be carefully and functionally integrated with the indoor spaces in order to achieve good spatial transition in the restaurant, thirdly landscape features create a feeling of comfort and refreshment and therefore should be incorporated in the design of outdoor dining spaces and finally safety is of paramount importance and should be considered in the planning of dining spaces.

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