



## **Evaluation of Indigenous Cuisine in Hotels and Restaurants in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author ARU designed the study and the first draft of the manuscript. Author OEO wrote the protocol and managed the analyses of the study. Authors MLC and ARU managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

As a result of the economic and social contribution of hospitality and tourism industry, there is a strong competition all over the world for the indigenous cuisine of the area. Most people are attracted to a specific area based on the cuisine. The aim of this study is to identify the major indigenous cuisine serve in Hotels and restaurant in Aba, since indigenous cuisine attracts tourists. Twenty (20) selected hotels were used for the study. Data for the study were collected using questionnaire and oral interviews. Descriptive statistics and simple percentage were used for the study. The result obtained shows that most hotels in Aba serve mainly continental cuisine more than the indigenous cuisine. Therefore the need to encourage branding of indigenous cuisine since it boosts our local economy, attracts tourists and our cuisine is more nourishing than the continental cuisine.

**Keywords:** *Indigenous; cuisine; globalization; hotels; Aba; tourism.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a vehicle for economic growth and job creation but it is an under-developed opportunity in Nigeria [1]. Nigeria is a great country vastly endowed with natural resources that attract tourists from all over the world. It has as much cultural heritage that have treasurable characteristic features passed down from generation to generation through mindful conservation. These include: greetings, norms, appearance, custom, cuisines and traditions but globalization has eroded some of these heritages giving ways to acculturation [2]. One of the challenges facing tourism industry development in Nigeria over time is our over dependence on western culture through globalization. The same is also affecting hotel's indigenous cuisine. A cuisine of a people is a style of cooking characterized by distinctive ingredients, techniques and dishes, usually associated with specific culture or geographic region. Nigerians are in dilemma of what culture they are, neither wholly indigenous nor totally foreign [3]. According to Udeani [4], Africans were told not to look back to their cultural values when they were colonized. Nigerians especially the Ibos are most influenced as the problem of globalization has affected their mindset [5]. Nigerians love to live, eat and do things mostly in a colonial way rather than promoting indigenous culture. Cuisines are cultural norms that are used to identify a nation, region or state; for instance Pizza originated from Italy but widely eaten in USA and popular in major Nigeria fast food because it has a strong brand across the globe. Sushi is common in Japan, Kebab, fish and chips are popular in Europe, Australia and New Zealand [6]. Ibo food handlers can also come up with strong brand indigenous cuisines such as Isi Ewu, Ofoda Rice, Ofe-Onugbu, Ofe-Ukazi, Jiiwai, Akidi, Ofe-Owerri, Ofe-Akwu, Ugba, Abacha, Okpa that other countries can popularize.

Nigeria has such a diversity of people and cultures that it is demanding to prize one national dish above the other. Each zone has its own regional favorite cuisines that depend on their custom, tradition, and religion. The cuisines play important roles in the structure of locations and tourism destinations. Climate, culture and history of a region form its food characteristics since food is considered as a subset of cultural tourism or heritage [7]. Ibo culture however are peculiar in terms of the types and forms in which cuisines

are consumed. For instance fruits and vegetables proliferate in Ibo cuisines but are highly seasonal. However, vegetables such as bitter leaf, *amaranthus* (green), *okazi*(*gnetum spp.*) and pumpkin (*ugu*) are available all year-round, but are expensive during the dry season [8]. Social and economic changes have influenced against the propagation and the use of these nutritious indigenous food plants in our hotels recently. Traditional food plants are accepted by rural communities as their customs and habits. Among the Ibos, different spices used in our local dishes are recognized by communities as having medicinal values. Studies have found out that bitter leaf apart from its use in cooking soups and other dishes can be chewed raw after washing to treat malaria and diabetes. Vegetable soup (*Ugu*) is used in the treatment of blood level (anemia). When cooked with water leaf can help in the treatment of malaria, dysentery and to boost appetite. *Egusi* is a spicy yellow soup made with meat, red chilies, ground dried shrimp, and greens. It is used as a major soup ingredient to produce a meat substitute in some areas. *Egusi* soup is highly valued in some Ibo communities and used during major functions and festivals. For this reason, there is a need for hotels and restaurant in Aba and Nigeria to serve mostly our native diet to attract tourist and to showcase our cultural heritage in cuisine, thus this study seek to identify major indigenous cuisine serve in hotels and restaurant in Aba.

## 2. STUDY AREA

This research was carried out in Aba. Aba is the main centre and the heartbeat of Abia State. It has two local governments: Aba North and Aba South. Aba is the giant of the South East, Nigeria and Japan of Africa. It lies at latitude 5°7'0"N, 7°22'0"E and longitude 5.177°N, 7.367°E (WGS84). It has a population of 534,265 [9]. Aba is at the intersection of road leading to Port Harcourt, Owerri, Umuahia, Ikot-Ekpene and Ikot-Abasi. It lies within the forest belt of Nigeria with temperature range between 20°C -36°C, the vegetation is tropical rainforest, with a total rainfall between 2200mm – 1900mm. The soil fall within the broad group of ferrallitic soil. The major crops grown include: cassava, maize, vegetable, yam, palm oil. Aba is a commercial city with big market Ariaria, the city is filled with business minded people. Trading and small scale business enterprise, white-collar workers

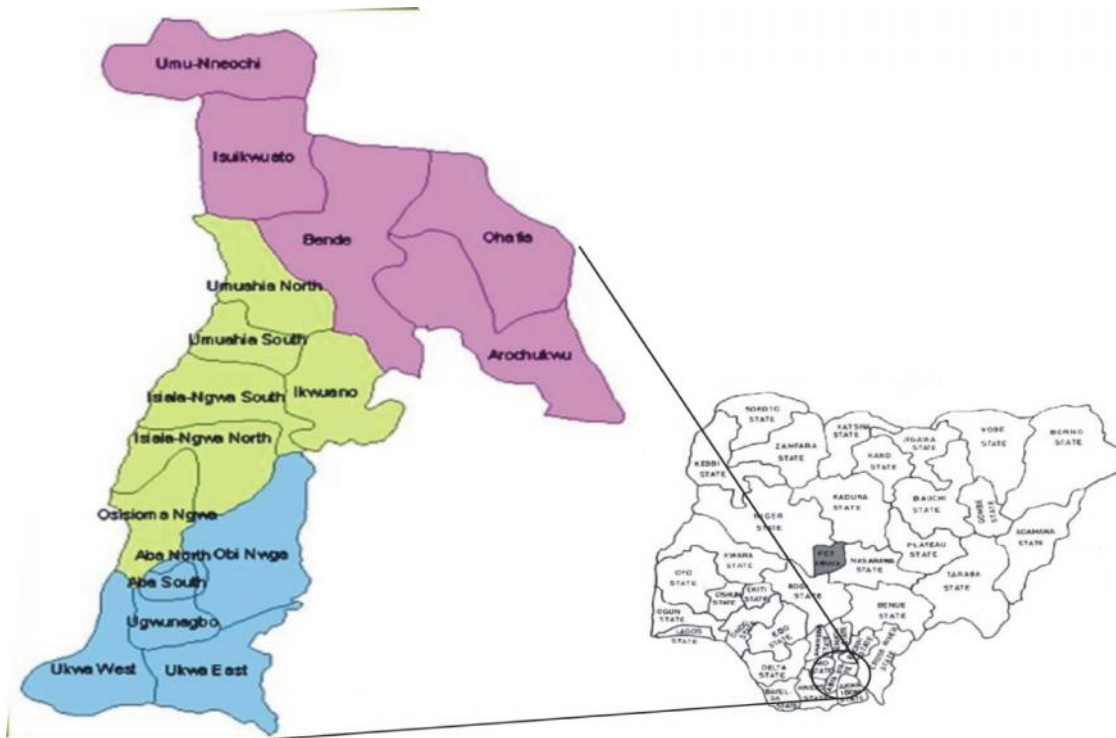


Fig. 1. Map of the study area

and agriculture are the major occupations of Aba people. All the citizens are committed in what they do. The city has talented skilled men and women that produces varieties of goods. Today, traders come from all over the continent Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and ivory Coast to buy made-in-Aba goods for resale. The originality of the artisan and tradesmen and their thoughtful skill in developing local content of all products became a story that transcended many shores. This has in turn increased Aba population especially the craftsmen and so many industries to invest in Aba.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a survey research design. There are about One hundred and ten (110) hotels and motels in Aba, fifty six of them have restaurants. There are fifteen (15) restaurants examples include; churchies, Apples, Chester etc excluding local joint. Oral interviews and questionnaire were used as a source of primary data collection, the research administered Two hundred (200) copies of questionnaires to the customers found in the hotel's restaurant and other restaurants used for the study at the time of

the visit. Twenty (20) different hotels and restaurants were selected for the study. Fifteen (15) hotels with restaurants and five (5) restaurants. Ten (10) questionnaires were administered to each of the hotels and restaurants. The sample size was determined using "Yaro Yamane" formula for a finite population. The selected hotels are examples of three and four star hotels in Aba. The selection was based on the popularity and patronage of the hotels and restaurants. Structured interviews were used to gather other relevant information mainly from the staff of the hotels/restaurants visited concerning the patronage of the indigenous and continental cuisine.

### 4. RESULTS

Two Hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed to customers and One Hundred and Ninety Six (196) were returned.

Table 1. Gender status of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	118	60.20
Female	78	39.80

Among the One hundred and Eighteen (118) were male representing 60.20 percent and 78 female representing 39.80 percent.

**Table 2. Qualification of respondents**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
WASCE	34	17.35
HND	56	28.57
B.Sc	42	21.43
M.Sc	21	10.71
Ph.D	16	8.16
Professional Certificate	27	13.78

The number of various respondents' qualifications were captured in the 196 returned questionnaires. The respondents' qualification report showed the categorization of the qualification according to WASCE, HND, B.Sc, M.Sc, Ph.D and Professional Certificate. The number of WASCE holders were 34, HND 56, B.Sc 24, M.Sc 21, Ph.D 16 and Professional Certificate 27. This provisional information indicates that HND holders were the highest respondents, as the Ph.D holders were the least respondent.

The ages of the respondents were considered and grouped in the following age interval: 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56 and above. The results showed that the hotel customers between the ages of 36 and 45 were 64 which is the highest number of respondents followed by customers between the age of 25 and 35 were 50, customers between

the ages of 46 and 55 were 49 and customers between the ages of 46 and above were 33.

**Table 3. Age bracket of respondents**

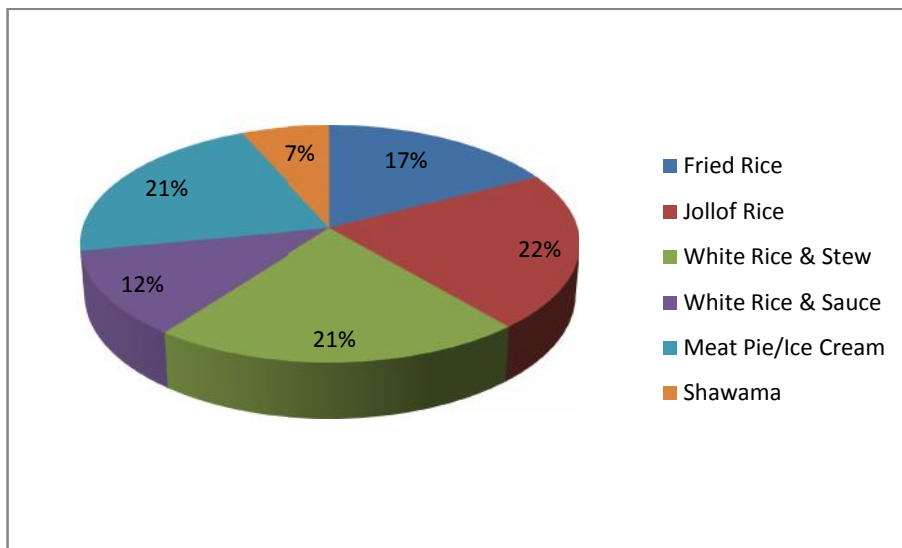
Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
25 – 35	50	25.51
36 – 45	64	32.65
46 – 55	49	25
56 and above	33	16.84

**Table 4. Weekly hotel visitation of respondents**

Visit	Frequency	Percentage
One	68	34.69
Two	50	25.51
Three	36	18.37
Four	21	10.71
Five	16	8.16
Six and above	05	2.55

Hotels are being visited daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. The number of times customers visit the hotels weekly was credibly ascertained in the questionnaires. According to the results obtained 68 customers visit the hotels once in a week, 50 customers visit two times per week, 36 visit three times in a week, 21 visit four times per week, 16 visit five times and 5 visit six times or more weekly.

Some continental dishes were found to be available in the hotel which were consumed by customers. These dishes include fried rice, jollof



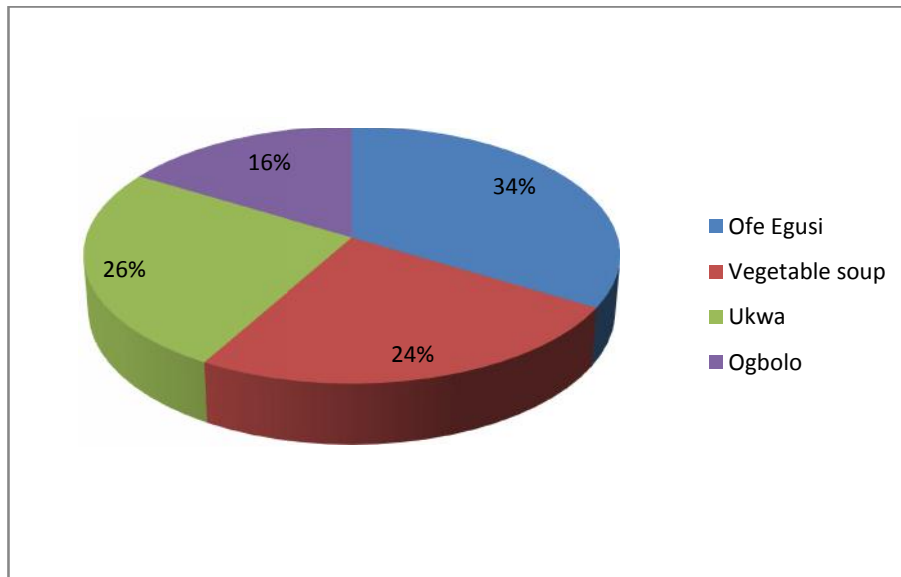
**Fig. 2. Percentage score of continental dishes mostly enjoyed in the hotels by respondents**

rice, white rice and stew, white rice with sauce, meat pie/ice cream and shawama. 42 customers consumed jollof rice, 42 consume white rice and stew, and 42 consumed meat/ice cream each. Also 34 customers consumed fried rice, 23 customers consumed white rice with sauce and 13 customers consumed shawama. This shows that 126 customers out of 196 consumed jollof rice, white rice and stew and meat pie/ice cream against 70 customers that consumed fried rice, white rice with sauce and Shawama. Jollof rice, white rice with stew and pie/ice cream are mostly consumed. Shawama was the least consumed continental dish in these hotels.

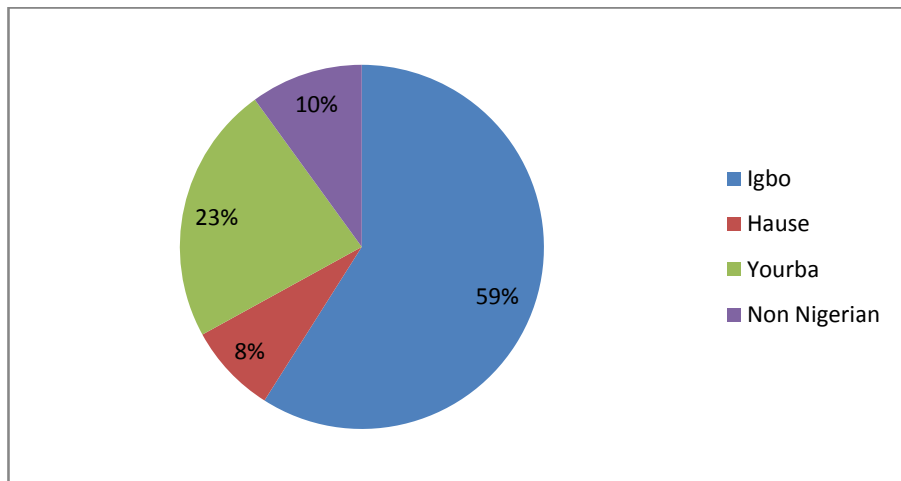
Ofe-Egusi, Ogbolo, Vegetable Soup and Ukwa are the most available indigenous cuisines in the hotels. From the results 66 customers consumed Egusi, 32 customers enjoyed Ogbolo, 48 consumed Vegetable Soup and 50 consumed Ukwa.

In Fig. 4, fifty nine percentage (59%) of the respondents belong to Igbo tribe, while 23% of the respondents are Yourba, 8% are the Hausa while 10% are Non Nigerian.

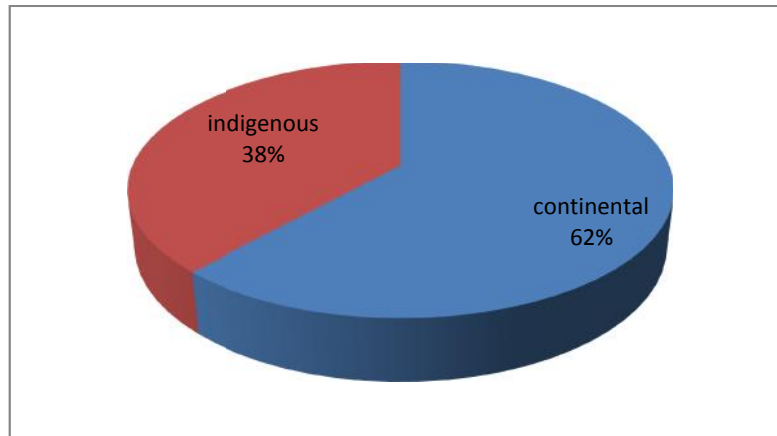
Fig. 5 shows that 75 individual mainly patronise indigenous cuisines accounting 38% while 121 customers mainly patronize continental dishes representing 62%.



**Fig. 3. Percentage score of indigenous dishes mostly enjoyed in the hotels by respondents**



**Fig. 4. Percentage score of respondent tribes/nationalities**



**Fig. 5. Patronage of indigenous and continental dishes**

## 5. DISCUSSION

Relationship exists between people's location, culture, indigenous cuisine, food security and nutrition. There is a prodigious concern on the underutilization and neglect of indigenous food species that can be of value to societies in terms of nutritional food security, income generation, medical value [10]. From the result of the study (figure 5), thirty eight percentage (38%) of the respondents preferred indigenous cuisine while sixty two percentage (62%) preferred continental cuisine, this is in line with [2], that globalization has eroded some of heritages giving ways to acculturation. Thus people over depend on western culture more than their own culture.

The indigenous cuisine has been specified as a contributor to several aspects of development and sustainability. Therefore, local/indigenous crop species can be instrumental in enhancing local food production and community empowerment. Indigenous cuisine varieties will enhance the brand of the local community area. Result obtained from figure four above, fifty nine percentage (59%) of the respondents belong to Igbo tribe, while 23% of the respondents are Yourba, 8% are the Hausa while 10% are Non Nigerian. Therefore, indigenous cuisine builds a 'brand identity' that can attract tourism and generate local pride, and create employment opportunities for local people [11]. Indigenous cuisine is a renowned essential element in local cultures and subsequently in the promotion of tourist destination which ignites community and economic development [12] and tourism-related food research [13].

Tourist perception on the nutritional value of indigenous cuisine such as edible leaves and

roots can change positively [14]. Thus, it is important to note that perceptions held by tourist are often cultural based and are embedded in history. According to Sims [15], there is a vital link between indigenous cuisine and tourism. The indigenous cuisine has the potential to play a central role within the sustainable tourism agenda, by encompassing everything that concerns food safety and the impacts of agriculture on the rural environment to visitor demands for more "authentic" tourist experience." However, it is also the case in food tourism "local food in the form of regional cuisine is rarely presented as an important resource in publicity material and promotional messages prepared for mainstream tourism" [10]. Therefore there is a need for indigenous cuisine to be already available in out hotels and restaurants for tourist attraction.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In Aba, indigenous cuisines are supposed to be the most available dishes in our hotels but the result of this investigation reveals that 62% of continental dishes are consumed in the hotels while 38% of local/indigenous dishes are consumed in the hotels. Only Ofe-Egusi, Vegetable soup, Ofe-Ukwa and Ogbolo soups are most available in the hotels while fried rice, jollof rice, white rice with stew, white rice with sauce, meat pie, ice cream, shawama etc are mostly consumed in the hotels. Out of 196 hotel customers, 60.20% of men visit the hotel while 39.80% of female visit the hotel. Thus, there is a need to increase the consumption of indigenous cuisines in our restaurants since these cuisines are excellent in terms of taste, freshness, easy to prepare and accessible. Branding of the indigenous cuisines can attract tourist movement

for trade/investment and encourage economic development in the state. However, for this to happen, Hotels in Aba and generally in Ibo land will strive to come up with the strong brand for their indigenous cuisines, strong enough to attract these tourists.

In view of the above findings and results, the recommendations are made;

Aba people that are within aba and outside, they should be re-oriented through conferences, workshops, publicity and advertisement about our indigenous cuisines, their benefits and the need to brand our cuisine in the restaurants and hotels.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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