## Cultural Practices and Food Consumption Behaviour of Guests Dining In 4-5 Star Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

Rachel Ndunge Mwanzia, Rosemarie Khayiya, PhD & Beatrice Kamau, PhD

# Cultural Practices and Food Consumption Behaviour of Guests Dining In 4-5 Star Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

[1*]**Rachel Ndunge Mwanzia, [2]Rosemarie Khayiya, PhD & [3]Beatrice Kamau, PhD**

[1, 2, 3]**Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Kenyatta University**

**\*Email of corresponding author: rachelndunge@gmail.com**

# Abstract

In a culturally diverse market such as Kenya, consumers form a mindset of foods to consume while dining out, have different food preferences, and assume different consumption behavior patterns while making food purchases. Cultural practices may influence their decisions, prohibiting them from eating certain foods. The study sought to investigate the influence of cultural practices on behaviors regarding food consumption of guests when dining out in restaurants found in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County. The study's target population was customers dining out in restaurants in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County and respective restaurant managers. A suitable pretest sample of 10 respondents was selected from walk-in customers and three restaurant managers from three restaurants picked from the hotels that were not part of the sample. Cronbach's Alpha obtained from the pre-tested 13 participants was 0.743. The ideal sample size of respondents drawn from restaurants in hotels classified as four- and five-star hotels according to the Tourism Regulatory Authority classification 2016 was determined by proportionate stratified sampling. The sampling technique for the Managers was purposive, selecting each Restaurant's Manager. The estimated number of respondents was 385 from a sample of restaurants in 21 hotels ranked as 4- and 5-star hotels in Nairobi County. Data collection involved questionnaires and direct interviews, yielding an 80.5% response rate with 310 adequately completed questionnaires and seven interviews. The analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, presenting the data in tables, charts, and graphs for each category of variables. The Chi-square Test was employed to assess the relationship between dependent and independent variables at a 95% confidence level. The findings showed a significant association between food taboos and the dining habits of patrons in 4-5 star hotel restaurants in Nairobi County ($\chi2$=8.980, p=0.003), a notable link between cultural beliefs and dining habits in the same context ($\chi2$=22.099, p<0.05), and a significant influence of rituals on these dining habits ($\chi2$=5.361, p=0.021<0.05). The study further established that the decision-making process significantly moderated the relationship between cultural practices and consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in four and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The

study concludes that modern-day food consumption behaviors result from several factors, including culture, taboo, religious beliefs, rituals, and thus food choice diversity. Therefore, 4- and 5-star hotel professionals should factor in the cultural element during menu planning to balance the catering, financial, and marketing policies.

**Keywords:** *Cultural influences, food consumption patterns, luxury hospitality, gastronomic tourism, Nairobi city county hospitality.*

## 1.0 Introduction

There are several factors that influence the food consumption behaviors that people portray. Culture is one of the most notable factors that determine food consumption behavior. It refers to how cultural factors such as belies, value, norms, traditions and practices shape individuals' food choices and eating habits. Food consumption behaviors are a standardized set of food-related behaviors that people express within a given cultural tradition, as suggested by Wijaya (2019). These behaviors involve various aspects related to the utilization of food, including the selection, acquisition, and distribution, as well as the individuals involved in cooking, serving and consuming the food (Wijaya, 2019).

In addition to being a significant component that has a significant impact on consumer behaviour, culture also refers to the values, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, regulations, and practices that are characteristic of a particular group of people at a certain point in time (Ram & Sharma, 2018). It is a set of behavior patterns common to group members, which are learned, shared, and transferred from generation to generation (Wijaya, 2019). Understanding the cultural influences is crucial for grasping why people consume certain foods and how their food preferences are established. Culture determines consumer expectations and how they perceive food, influencing preferences for food choices, and acceptance of certain foods, purchasing decisions, and defining what foods to consume or not to consume (Sibal, 2018; Jeong & Lee, 2021).

Cultural practices are the factors or forces within cultures that affect and influence people's behaviors. Globally several studies put forward various ways in which culture may influence different consumption behaviors. For example, a study conducted to determine the factors influencing the food consumption choices of a traveler while away from home revealed that culture is one of the consistently significant predictors of food consumption (González, Curtis, Washburn & Shirsat, 2019). While culture is seen as dominant contributor of various food choices away from home, globalization on the other hand has contributed to blending of cultures and dissemination of different cuisines. This has led to the adoption of new food preferences and behavoiurs influenced by other cultures.

Culture can lead to adoption of traditional dishes and eating practices that reflect a particular cultural group. In the United States (US), a study found out that Southern black Americans may occasionally eat soul food, which is typically their cuisine, as an expression of ethnic solidarity (Vance, 2018). The "soul food" is often prepared during funerals gatherings as a way to bring comfort, strength and nourishment during a difficult time. The soul food in this case is used to connect people with their heritage and feel a sense of belonging within their cultural community. Preparation of certain foods especially during extraordinary times such as festivals, weddings or religious ceremonies in various cultures, are significantly influenced by cultural beliefs and

traditions, as pointed out in a case study of special religious days in turkey (Shipman & Durmus, 2017).

In Africa, culture plays a significant role in shaping food consumption behaviours. Food is deeply intertwined with African culture and traditional beliefs, practices and values; having a strong impact on how food is prepared, shared and consumed. For instance culture and ethnicity are the most critical determinants of consumption behavior of food and beverages in Egyptian communities, influencing their food choices, preparation, and consumption (Ansari, 2021). Food is often seen as more than just sustenance but also as a way to connect with one's heritage and ancestors. Traditional dishes and cooking practices are highly valued and passed down through generations, playing a central role in cultural celebrations, rituals and gatherings.

The cultural practices that affect the consumption decisions of consumers in Sub-Saharan Africa are unique to a given region with similar ethnic groups. Many prioritize the use of locally sourced and seasonal ingredients; traditional cooking methods are also preferred as they are believed to have beneficial qualities to the food. This was noted in a research findings in Ghana that cultural practices such as ethnic eating habits influence consumers' attitudes to specific food items (Bujac, 2018). It is also revealed from the results of the research conducted in Hungary that culture has an impact on the consumption behavior of international students, distinguishing the kind of ethnicity somebody belongs to and developing consumption habits and preferences as well as (Nemeth, Rudnak, Ymeri, & Fogarassy, 2019). Another study conducted in Gaborone, Botswana, revealed that open culture, which is indicative of culture amongst diners, is a significant predictor of tourists' food consumption behavior (Mahachi-Chatibura, 2015). Similarly, in different East African communities, perceptions, preferences, and food choices are influenced by culture and social status, determining consumption of specific foods. Cultural norms and etiquette shapes shape how food is shared. Communal eating is highly valued with individuals gathering to share meals and often eating from the same plate. This practice promotes sense of unity, solidarity and social interaction in the communities.

Food consumption behavior in Kenya is varied and laced up with rich cultural practices, rituals, beliefs, and societal norms that define them as a distinct cultural identity as well as contributing to a wide array of traditional foods and customs surrounding their consumption. Cultural practices in Kenya greatly influence what people eat, how they prepare food, the mealtime schedules, and even the prohibition of specific food and portion sizes for different age groups and genders (Ngugi, Mwangi &Apollos, 2018). Food consumption in Kenya is deeply entrenched in the cultural fabric and has a higher priority amongst the diverse cultures in Kenya. It shapes the culinary traditions associated with specific ethnic groups, types of cuisine associated to specific communities and foods consumed on religious events. A Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) Innovation Lab report on key trends driving innovation in the restaurant industry held that increasing preferences for cultural cuisines inspire restaurants to diversify their food offerings (Fultz, 2016). Hence, restaurants strive to sell a range of foods to meet the needs of the diversified cultural market. It is for this reason that restaurants must remain vigilant and have a deeper understanding of the cultural context within which the consumer behavior takes place, the extent to which consumers' culture influences their behavior and decisions related to purchasing, and how culture affects consumers' selection criteria (Josiam & Henry, 2014). Therefore, this study looked at the determinants of culture that influence how guests eat when dining out in restaurants in hotels rated as 4 and 5 stars in Nairobi County.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Restaurant serve as platforms for cultural representations and diversity. Acknowledging and incorporating cultural influences not only provides a rich and varied culinary offering but also fosters inclusivity and appreciation of different cultures. However, there is need to understand the extent and implications of these cultural influence for ensuring customer satisfaction and for restaurant to create memorable dining experience that cater for diverse tastes and preferences of their customers as well as contributing to business success.

The restaurant guests have unpredictable and ever-increasing expectations, bringing about challenges to the restaurant industry on the restaurant offerings as alluded by (Chua *et al.,* 2020). Different customers have distinct food preferences and dining experiences. They expect to have a variety of menu food items that suit their food preferences. These concerns can benefit restaurant managers in tailoring strategies that satisfy the needs and expectations of different groups of customers. The restaurant industry outlook report presented by the National Restaurant Association (NRA, 2017) reveals that food consumption behavior is changing, and today's restaurant guests not only desire warm and engaging service they also require some cultural connection (Fultz, 2016).

The study further indicates that at least 80 percent of consumers eat approximately one cultural cuisine per month. Another survey by Zocchi & Fontefrancesco (2020) reveals that the food consumption behavior of restaurant guests is changing with rising demand for traditional products attributed to the unique culinary traditions of specific ethnic groups. The study carries on saying that designing restaurant menus is primarily influenced by the ethnic backgrounds of the customers. The primary menu decision-makers believe that, for restaurants to remain competitive in the market, they should provide a rich and varied menu offering that can satisfy the needs of their guests (Zocchi & Fontefrancesco, 2020). This can increase the appeal and accessibility of the restaurants to a broader customer base.

Moreover, Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler's (KPMG) innovation Lab held that the key trend driving innovation in the restaurant industry is increasing preferences for cultural cuisines, inspiring restaurants to diversify their food offerings (Fultz, 2016). Hence restaurants strive to sell various food products to fulfill the needs of the diversified cultural market. A profound insight was also put forward in a report by The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company, recommending that restaurants deliver the type of cultural connection and experience guests desire by introducing and celebrating local products and influences (SGEInternational, 2018).

In the African region, cultural eating practices of many sub-Saharan African countries prohibit the consumption of particular food items. These prohibitions are possibly restricted entirely or have limitation to certain days of the week or specific occasions. Overtime this inclination slowly influences the individual's food choice, becoming a determining factor in their selection of what to eat, thus altering habits and behaviors (Miassi *et al.,* 2022). Enriquez and Archila-Godinez (2022) emphasize that culture affects food choice by influencing consumers' acceptance of new food technologies and innovations, resulting in varied food beliefs, consequently specifying what food consumers choose.

In Kenya, culture greatly influences food-related behaviors ranging from feeding practices, what people eat, and how they prepare their food. Various studies have been done on consumption behavior in different contexts. For instance, Njagi (2017) conducted a study on the consumption

of junk food in fast-food restaurants in Nairobi. The study revealed that consumer buying behaviour has a major influence on the consumption of junk food in these restaurants. This study mostly examined fast-food outlets rather than 4-5 star hotels, which creates a methodological gap. Moreover, the study employed the theory of buyer behaviour and the consumer behaviour theory, which diverges from the present study, thus indicating a theoretical gap.

Another study conducted by Fwaya and Mbithe, (2017) looked at the factors influencing the need for consumption of healthy foods in selected Restaurants in Nairobi City, it revealed that culture was the second most noticeable factor that directed the consumption of healthy eating foods in restaurants. The study was grounded on the Integrated Behavioural Model (IBM), which explains that behavior can be seen as the results of personal intentions, which are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, personal values, beliefs, habits, and environmental limitations. In contrast, the current study used the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which proposes that individuals' behavior can be predicted and understood through the behavioral intentions. These behaviours are influenced by three main factors namely; the attitude towards that behavior, which refers to an individual's overall evaluation and personal feeling towards a specific behavior; the subjective norms, often the perceptions of social pressure about the opinion of others and finally the perceived behavioral control, which is the individuals perception of their ability to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 2015).

Lastly, a study by Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020) investigated the developments in the restaurant sector in Nakuru County. It concluded that cultural authenticity was not the reason for relaunching traditional food and cuisine development but rather the demand for healthy and natural products. Nonetheless, the reviewed literature has not given the focus on how culture influences food consumption behaviors in restaurants located within the four and five star rated hotels in Nairobi, Kenya. The only study which looked at four and five-star hotels was by Kariru, Edwin, & Kambona (2015) but focused on consumer-driven factors that influence consumer behavior. In addition, the above-cited studies were informed by different theories; hence theoretical gap is identified. Moreover, the studies adopted different methodologies; for example, Njagi (2017) employed descriptive correlational research design and looked at 30 fast food restaurants, Were and Maranga (2017) adopted a cross-section survey design and targeted food outlets in Kisumu and the others also used different methodologies, hence methodological gaps are presented. Therefore, this study aimed to address the identified gaps by examining houw cultural practices influence the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants located within the four and five-star rated hotels in Nairobi County.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

 i.  To assess the influence of food taboos on food consumption behavior of guest dining in five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.
 ii. To assess the influence of cultural beliefs on food consumption behavior of guest dining in five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.
 iii. To assess the influence of rituals on food consumption behavior of guest dining at five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.
 iv. To determine the influence of the decision-making process on the relationship between cultural practices and consumption behavior of guest dining in the five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.

**1.3 Research hypotheses**

**Ho1**     There is no significant influence of food taboos on the food consumption behavior of guest dining in five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.

**Ho2**     There is no significant influence of cultural beliefs on the food consumption behavior of guest dining in five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.

**Ho3**     There is no significant influence of rituals on the food consumption behavior of guest dining in five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.

**Ho4**     There is no significant influence of the decision-making process on the relationship between cultural practices and consumption behavior of guest dining in five and four star hotels in Nairobi County.
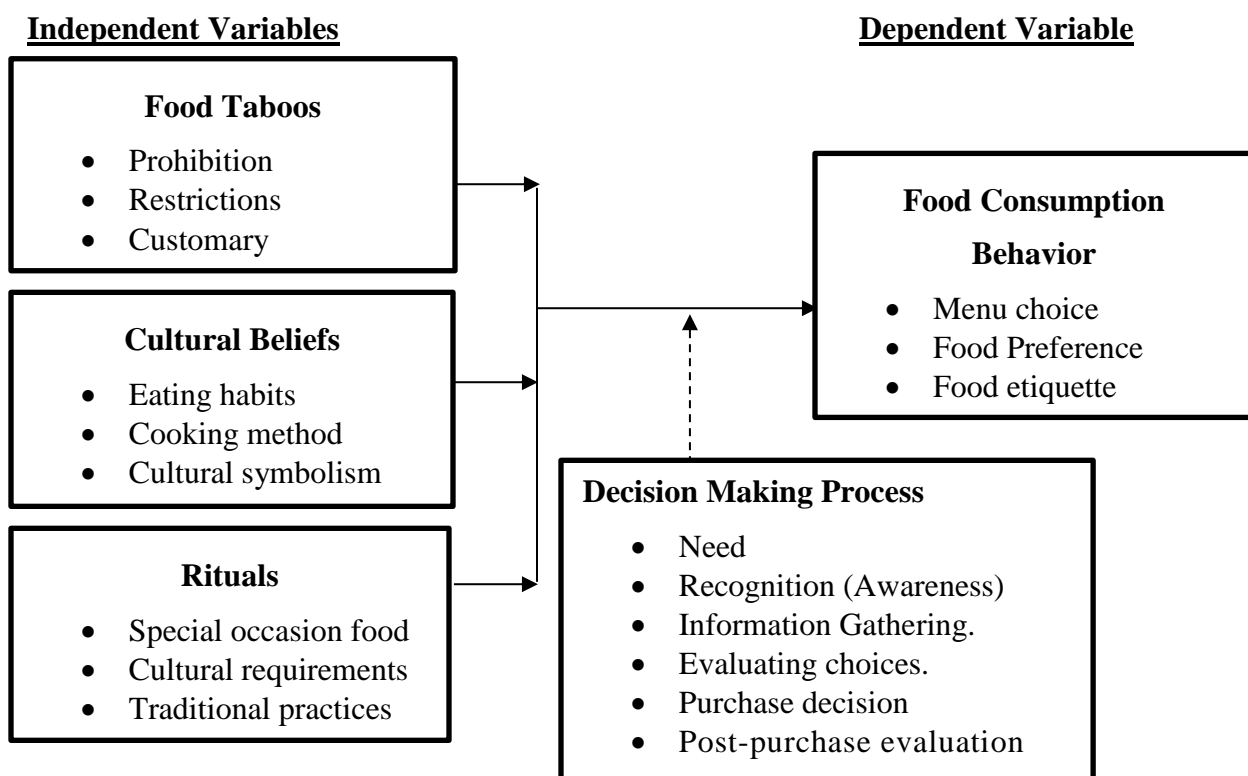
**1.4 Conceptual framework**

<u>**Independent Variables**</u>                                        <u>**Dependent Variable**</u>

**Food Taboos**
- Prohibition
- Restrictions
- Customary

**Cultural Beliefs**
- Eating habits
- Cooking method
- Cultural symbolism

**Rituals**
- Special occasion food
- Cultural requirements
- Traditional practices

**Food Consumption Behavior**
- Menu choice
- Food Preference
- Food etiquette

**Decision Making Process**
- Need
- Recognition (Awareness)
- Information Gathering.
- Evaluating choices.
- Purchase decision
- Post-purchase evaluation

**Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework**

*SOURCE: Adapted from Lamb et al. (2004)*

**2.1 Theoretical framework**

**2.1.1 Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that links beliefs to behavior, as first described by Icek Ajzen in 1985, suggests that an individual's behavior is determined by behavioral intentions that are formed by three factors that work together to shape an individual's behavior and explain the

behavioral intention before the behavior occurs (Ajzen, 1991). These factors are; the formation of attitude towards a behavior, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2015). When people form an attitude towards a behaviour, they affirm how they think and believe, which is related to the expectations that people have regarding that behaviour. Subjective norms, on the other hand, are those that pertain to the support and encouragement that are permitted or not permitted by society, which in turn influence the behaviour of members of the individual. Perceived behaviour control is a term that describes how a person feels about their ability to carry out the behaviour that they have planned to carry out (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB is able to forecast an individual's intention to carry out a particular behaviour at a particular time and location. Consequently, it aims to provide an explanation for behaviours that are imposed on a person that are not totally under their control.

### 2.1.2 The Veblen Theory

The Veblenian social-psychological model advanced by Thorstein Veblen in 1899 holds that people's behavior should conform to the norms of their culture, subculture, and the standards of the close social groups they associate with. It says that people act depending on past and present social groups. This implies that the decisions and behaviors people display are hence influenced by the society in which they live (Kotler, 2000). This model places a lot of emphasis on the social nature of consumption. Since the consumers' social and cultural backgrounds are essential to their buying behavior, Mitra and Majumder (2019) assert that humans make purchases based on societal and cultural associations. This theory is therefore used to explain how people's consumption decisions are greatly affected by cultural forces. Consequently, the importance of diverse cultural influences, such as culture, subculture, and social reference groups, is significant when businesses differentiate their products or services.

### 2.1.3 The Three-Stage Model of Service Consumption

This model, which was initially proposed by Fisk (1981), explains how customers go through three significant stages when they are consuming services in order to select the options that best suit their needs. The pre-purchase stage, the service encounter stage, and the post-encounter stage respectively are the stages that make up this process. The pre-purchase stage is where consumption behavior is prompted by arousing a need to search for appropriate information for solutions to satisfy customers' needs, evaluating available choices before they make a purchase decision, then forming consideration sets and expectations before making a preferred choice (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015; Wirtz, 2017; Wirtz & Christopher, 2022). Through the service encounter stage, guests have the opportunity to engage in direct interaction with the restaurant's staff. During the course of the service experience, customers engage in conversation with the service environment, service staff, and even individual customers who are there. The framework in which customers can establish, express, and increase their involvement (whether good or negative) with a service firm could be provided by this (Wirtz, 2017; Wirtz & Christopher, 2022).

Finally, there is the post-encounter stage, where the service performance is assessed and compared to the customer's initial expectations. Customer loyalty behaviours, including as preference, liking, and future intentions to repurchase from the same firm and suggest it to friends, can be influenced by this factor (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2012). This model aims to provide insights into the process by which customers identify their needs, explore different options, mitigate perceived risks, make a selection, utilise and engage with a specific service, and ultimately assess their overall happiness with the service experience (Wirtz, 2017). Moreover, the restaurants would employ this theoretical

framework to comprehend methods of expanding their menu options in accordance with customers' preferences and distinguishing themselves from competitors in order to attract or to be appealing to new guests and retain their current clientele.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### 2.2.1 Understanding the Role of Cultural Practices on Food Consumption

Understanding cultural practices' role in food consumption forms a basis for exploring the influence on consumption behavior. Different scholars describe the relationship between food and culture in different ways. Culture is a set of behaviors, habits, as well as beliefs accepted by people, which is learned, shared, and transferred from one group to another (Özdemir & Emir, 2019). Culture also refers to how people live, basically the behavior of people living together. It gives orders, directions, and guides societies in all phases of life by providing essential ways of satisfying their needs. Therefore, it is sensible to say that culture can significantly determine and act as a means that regulates the way of life, especially people's consumption-related behaviors. Culture is learned and acquired through exposure and interaction with a group. As reiterated by Monterrosa et al. (2020), the foods that people like and their food preferences are acquired as a result of the to repeated exposure to foods, which is primarily learned through conditioning. They further noted that parents significantly shape the food consumption behavior of children by serving as role models, offering encouragements, setting limits and use food a form of incentive.

Even though literature highlights the significance of cultural influence in light of consumption behaviors, its effect is so common that its behavioral impact is assumed to be natural. According to Gurbuz and Macabangin (2019), in a study on factors affecting consumers' behavior in purchasing products, it is pointed out that cultural aspects and consumption have a substantial connection. Similarly, Qoura and Ali (2018) also noted that culture is a significant determinant influencing food consumption; the cultural background of individuals impacts their attitudes and behaviours towards products and their food consumption habits, ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions and actions related to buying goods and services(González *et al.,* 2019). Within a specific group, culture influences what food is acceptable or unacceptable, affecting the type of ingredients used and considered suitable. Culture enables individuals to decide how to act and what characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and values to share (González *et al.,* 2019).

### 2.2.2 Contribution of cultural practices on food consumption behavior

Cultural practices profoundly influence the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants. They shape individuals' preferences, choices, and rituals surrounding food. Several studies have recognized the cultural influences on food consumption behavior as a network of practices, one of the most notable being food customs (Vance, 2018). These customs give rise to food choices, variations in consumption patterns of certain foods, and restrictions on some foods depending on an individual's interaction with the cultural groups they belong to (Shipman & Durmus, 2017; Monterrosa *et al.,* 2020). According to Sibal (2018), the association between culture and food is that through food consumption patterns, people connect to their culture, hence retaining their cultural identity.

Nevertheless, culture proposes some parameters for the consumption of some foods. The eating pattern of people is based on their acquired behaviors inherited from the society they live in or learned from the groups they associate with. Notably, behaviors concerning the serving or consumption of meals, specific dining etiquette, particular beliefs about some foods, the order of

service, the portion sizes, variety of menu items available at each meal and meal patterns such as breakfast, dinner, and lunch are typical behavioral patterns observed in many cultures and repetitively performed like a ritual (Monterrosa *et al.,* 2020).

## Food taboos

Culture insists on a variety of norms, such as taboos, that inspire and set guidelines, restrictions, beliefs, habitual practices, and patterns related to consumer behavior and specify culturally agreed and acceptable behavior, even modifying the perception of behavior (Pellandini-Simányi, 2014; Lawan & Zanna, 2013). Food taboos are practices known to set rules that dictates which foods or combinations of foods or ingredients that are prohibited for consumption (Chakona & Shackleton, 2019). These food taboos can be influenced by religious teachings, health beliefs, environmental considerations or cultural practices surrounding food preparation, consumption or sourcing.

Cultural taboos are often deeply rooted in traditions and customs. These customs are passed down through generations, shaping individuals' food consumption behaviors. According to Pellandini-Simányi (2014), some food taboos are codified by law and enforced as legal regulations passed and supported by the state's power. These are the written rules governing what and how much food an individual can consume. According to Pellandini-Simányi (2014), taboos regulate various practices and behavior. Consequently, this study focused on food taboos as another cultural determinant that regulates the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants.

## Cultural belief

A belief is an individual's distinctive thought, perspective and understanding about something; often rooted in acquired knowledge, opinion, and faith (Saygı & Shipman, 2021). Beliefs can be challenged and changed; for instance, when people migrate from one region to another, their beliefs may be adapted to the new location. Beliefs about acceptable or unacceptable food vary depending on religion, cultural heritage, and geographical location (Saygı & Shipman, 2021). Consumers' food consumption patterns have undergone noticeable changes due to shifts in beliefs in the recent years. However these beliefs can vary significantly across different regions and communities, resulting in diverse dietary practices and preference.

In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, women and young children often face restrictions on consuming specific food due to some cultural beliefs that the foods could be harmful (Chakona & Shackleton, 2019). Yet again pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children are encouraged to vary their diets to promote maternal and child health and improve the child. In Kenya, there are several cultural beliefs stemming from diverse ethnic groups that significantly influence food consumption behaviours. Some communities may avoid foods believed "unclean or impure" due to cultural beliefs related to purity and cleanliness. The Maasai believe that eating partially cooked and even raw meat is curative. Additionally, the traditional fermented foods such as Mursik (fermented milk) among the Kalenjin community are believed to promote gut health because of their probiotic properties and hence seen as beneficial for overall well-being.

## Rituals

Rituals are patterned and repeated practices and activities that refer to the range of actions and customs associated with food, including how it is chosen, consumed and shared within social context. These rituals involve decisions about the type of food, the timing of meals, the location and manner of eating and individual with whom one shares these experiences (Brumberg-Kraus, 2020). Rituals can also refer to special religious practices where various occasions and deeply held

values guide the selection of specific foods. Cultural rituals are regarded as norms in eating patterns symbolic of broader structures of society, conveying symbolic meaning about the context of food consumption and differentiating them from a mere routine (Ondieki *et al.,* 2017). They often involve prescribed behaviours, gestures, or practices that are repeated or performed during specific periods, occasions or events.

Rituals not only enhance consumption, as presented by some researchers, but also bring communities together, reinforcing social and family bonds, increasing consumption enjoyment, and transforming food choices desirable within a group. The act of family members eating together, symbolizes a sense of unity, providing a sense of belonging and a means through which critical social relations are recognized and nurtured (Ram, 2020). Rituals often foster sense of belonging, promoting social cohesion and strengthen group identity through shared meals and communal dining practices. The food consumed within these contexts serves as a means of fostering social connections and showcasing cultural interactions.

### 2.2.3 Food consumption behaviors

The studies of consumption behaviors are based on consumer buying behavior, as Kotni and Divya (2019) cited. These behaviors or patterns consumers depict when buying are captivated by their needs, preferences, and tastes. These may result in habitual buying behavior, whereby guests make choices routinely and may not need to consult anyone for their opinions before making routine consumptions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). The guests, in this case, are likely to repeatedly choose one type of product that they are familiar with since they get satisfied when consuming the same food item often; as a result, they may not evaluate the choices even after the purchase because of beliefs about the product formed by impulsive learning that occurred in response to a stimulus (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

### Food-related consumption behaviors

The different food consumption behaviors that diners portray while dining out in restaurants are tailored through the Consumer decision-making Style Investigation (CSI) model (Sproles & Kendall, 1986; Bandara, 2014). The consumer decision-making styles are observed as the 'basic buying-decision-making behaviors that buyers possess when making purchasing decisions (M̧acik, 2016). Essentially, Sproles and Kendall pointed out that "the basic consumer personality trait reveals the behaviors and attitudes of consumers when making choices among alternatives" (Andersson, Hallberg & Ingfors, 2016).

Several studies reported that consumers' personality traits differ due to differences in their cultural backgrounds; hence, different cultural contexts lead to different consumer decisions and consumption behavior patterns (Amulike, 2018). Further suggestion by Amulike (2018) reveals that the norms and values that prevail in a given culture have an impact on the consumers who are exposed to it, which offer conditions that consumers use to direct their consumption behavior. Food consumption behaviors are learned and acquired mainly from the cultural background and through exposure or interactions with a particular group of people or even as a result of structured daily routines and in modeling food behavior. These factors influence food choices by establishing preferences, likes and dislikes, and food-related etiquette (Shah, 2018).

### Guest's Food choices in restaurants

As articulated by Franchi (2012), the food choices by a guest are often founded on some cultural values, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes held by the individual. This is evident in some cultural

practices and restrictions that result in unchanging and rigid food habits that affect food consumption even in a restaurant context (Mak, Lumbers, Anita, & Chang, 2012; Mak, 2018). For example, all Muslims are obligated to eat halal food in family settings and even when dining out (Mak *et al.,* 2012; Mak, 2018). Similarly, Japanese, French, and Italian tourists dining out in restaurants are perceived to avoid local food in tourist destinations and always prefer to eat their articular cultural food (Mak *et al.,* 2012; Mak, 2018). Therefore cultural values that people prescribe dictate their perception and how they think about certain foods; thus, it becomes unlikely to go against their cultural rules even when making food choices while dining out in a restaurant (Franchi, 2012).

### Food preferences

Preferences are people's attitudes created from the evaluative judgment of a consideration set of valued options, discovered after the decision-making process, and mostly a learned behavior determined by exposure (Shipman & Durmus, 2017). They are usually a combination of liking some foods, disliking others, and even how often people want to eat a specific type of food. Eating habits reveal persons' food preferences often connected to culture, among other factors, as presented by Krause et al. (2015). Food preferences and choices are embedded in aspects such as; rituals, cultural beliefs, and family structure and may differ due to the cultural diversity in different subcultures or subgroups within a nation or region. These preferences are cultured unconsciously as people grow up or through socialization with reference groups, in situations of mere exposure to repeated food consumption habits and observing other people as they eat (Vabø & Hansen, 2014). For example, some food served on particular days in different families and shared communally can influence food preferences.

### 2.2.4 Decision-making process of guests in restaurants settings

The second stage is the search for information, where the guest will look for different information and alternatives that can support them in making a purchase decision and satisfy their need. The guest then evaluates options and forms the most preferred choices. Even though assessing alternatives is essential in decision-making, consumers skip some routine purchases at this stage. They choose one type of product they are familiar with since they get satisfied whenever they repeatedly consume the same food item. They may not evaluate the choice even after the purchase because of beliefs about the product formed by impulsive learning (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

The next stage is the purchase when the guest must choose what to buy, where, and how to buy the product. Here the guest decides between different hotel brands, restaurant options within the hotel brands, and the products available on the menu mix. Guest choices at this stage can be complex, as when they encounter several decisions and the uncertainty of their preferences, they may often find it challenging to make some choices than others, as Wei *et al.* (2021) noted. Various sources of information can affect the consumer's decision, including the customers' experience at the moment of purchase and previous interactions with the hotel brand, the restaurant, or the products (Schoultz *et al.,* 2022).

Then the final stage is post-purchase which involves evaluating the guests' post-purchase behavior that would ultimately bring about the actions taken after purchase based on satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Monterrosa *et al.,* 2020). Customers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their product choice sets out the customers' future consumption behavior (Schoultz et al., 2022). Though the decision-making process provides critical information and background for understanding how

guests make purchase decisions, not all decision processes can lead to a purchase. Owing to consumers not always following the five stages sequentially (Wei *et al.,* 2021).

**Moderating Effect of Guests' Decision-Making Process**

It is noted that the decision-making process can moderate food consumption behavior by modifying the preferences for given foods, bringing about varied consumption behaviors (Almerico, 2014; Ting *et al.,* 2017). The process induces customers to think about food products and, as a result, make food choices, buy them, and eventually consume them (Almerico, 2014). According to Stankevich (2017), the consumer buying process moderates the consumers' decision-making process. Dining out in a restaurant may be considered a complex high, involvement purchase behavior with diverse product features whereby cultural practices greatly influence the decision-making process (Mak, 2018). It is regarded as complex because dining events and activities before and after are characterized by making a thoughtful purchase choice. This consumer involvement can be an interest, concern, or commitment toward a product, considered a thought-provoking force apparent in the various stages of the decision-making process (Aghdaie *et al.,* 2014).

**3.0 Research Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey design to examine how cultural practices influence the food consumption behaviors of diners in restaurants located within the four and five star rated hotels in Nairobi City County. The qualitative technique, which focused on obtaining data through open-ended questions and interviews, was applied to allow the collection of diverse views to enhance the understanding of the extent to which culture influences customers' food consumption behavior while dining in restaurants (Creswell, 2014). It produced findings not arrived at by statistical procedures but rather by a detailed description of participants' experiences, behaviors, sentiments, feelings, opinions, and cultural influences on behavior during interactions between guests and restaurants.

The target population of the study was the 4 -5 star rated hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya. These hotels are formal full-service restaurants, often with high-quality environments offering table service with varied menus for each meal period, carefully prepared and presented, unique and superior in quality, as cited by (Chen, 2015). The key respondents were the customers dining in restaurants in these four and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The restaurant managers were also included as part of the critical menu decision-makers who have the best available valuable and relevant information knowledge concerning the sample subjects. According to Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA, 2016), 11 hotels were classified as four-star and ten ranked as five-star hotels in Nairobi, giving 21 hotels. The target population of respondents, customers, and restaurant managers, was drawn from these 21 hotels. The respondents' target population was 9,000 guests, based on the daily occupancy profile of the hotels with an average bed capacity of 198 - 450 beds, as predicted by Theuri (2021). The study selected approximately 35 guest respondents from each hotel sampled, and 11 respondents were also drawn from the restaurant managers.

Proportionate stratified sampling was used to determine a suitable number of hotels for the sample. The hotels where the luxury restaurants are found were grouped into two strata according to their star rating. These are the five- and four-star hotels in Nairobi County, as the TRA (2016) provided. Ten (10) hotels are classified as five-star and eleven (11) hotels as four-star, making a total of

twenty-one (21) hotels in Nairobi. A proportional sample of 10 % of the respondents per restaurant was an adequate sample, as Pandey & Pandey (2015) suggested. To be methodical, the Researcher selected respondents' samples by convenient sampling technique, randomly selecting customers who walked into the restaurant and considering their accessibility. The sampling technique for the Managers was purposive, selecting each Restaurant's Manager. This technique was ideal because the restaurant managers have the best available knowledge of the sample subjects.

A sample size of 10% of restaurants was a suitable sample drawn from the population of the four and five-star hotels in Nairobi County as per the TRA classification 2016. Based on the 9,000 approximated target population of the respondents who were guests. A representative sample size of respondents dining in the 4-5 star rated hotel's restaurants was determined based on the following formulae used for a huge population size.

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 \times (p) \times (1 - p)}{C^2}$$

Where $SS$ = required sample size, $\mathbf{Z^2}$ =Z-value,

$P$ = proportion of the population having the characteristic, $C$ = the degree of precision, which is the acceptable margin of error.

The researcher used a confidence level of 95% and a standard deviation of 0.5 was used. A margin of error of +/- 5% was also assumed.

$$SS = \frac{1.96^2 \times (0.5) \times (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} \qquad = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} \qquad = 384.16$$

Therefore;

The estimated number of guest respondents from the formula was **385,** and there are **11** sampled hotels. Therefore, the total number of guests from the formula was divided by the **11** hotels to get approximately **35** respondents of guests per hotel sampled. The researcher used questionnaires as well as face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire adapted from the original Cultural Values Scale (CVS) sought to measure various beliefs, views, and attitudes of guests with diverse cultural backgrounds that influence food consumption behavior while dining in restaurants in 4 – 5–star rated hotels in Nairobi County. Data collection was made possible with the help of research assistants who provided support by seeking consent to participate in the research from the identified respondents, distributing questionnaires, assisting the respondents where necessary, and collecting the filled questionnaires. Some respondents were not able to complete the questionnaires. Therefore, this compelled the researcher to conduct the exercise for a more extended period than the projected time limit to attain the desired sample. Out of the 385 administered questionnaires, 310 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned, yielding a response rate of 80.5%.

Once data collection process was done, the data was then coded and cleaned ready for analysis to check for any errors. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) was employed to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were employed to provide condensed data in tables, charts, and graphs illustrating the responses for each category of variables. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic profile. Statistical inference was employed to make conclusions about a population based on the answers of the samples. A Chi-square Test was

performed to ascertain the existence of a correlation between the dependent and independent variables with a confidence level of 95%. The chi-square test findings were used to test the hypotheses. The criterion for rejecting or accepting the hypotheses was based on the p-value, which needed to be less than 0.05 at a 95% confidence range. If the p-value met this condition, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected; otherwise, it was not rejected.

## 4.0 Findings and Discussion

385 questionnaires were distributed to the guest respondents from the sampled 21 hotels ranked as 4- and 5-star in Nairobi County. Of the 385 administered questionnaires, 310 were correctly filled and returned, yielding a response rate of 80.5%. Additionally, interviews were done with the sampled 11 restaurant managers, and 7 interviews were completed. All completed questionnaires were edited for accuracy, uniformity, consistency, and completeness. The demographic analysis of guests dining in 4- and 5-star hotels in Nairobi County revealed a majority female attendance (56.10%) compared to male guests (43.90%). The predominant age group was 36-45 years (24.80%), closely followed by those aged 46-55 years (24.50%), and 26-35 years (18.40%). The majority of guests were local Kenyan citizens, with a smaller representation from Asia (11.30%) and other African countries (10.60%), while visitors from the USA and Europe each accounted for 9.70%. A significant proportion of guests (74.90%) earned a monthly salary above KES 51,000, indicating a relatively high spending power. Educationally, most guests held bachelor's degrees (55.5%), with master's degree holders at 23.9%, suggesting a well-educated clientele frequenting these establishments.

Guests visited these hotels for various reasons, with 39% being first-time visitors, and a significant number having visited more than five times (27.7%). Business dealings (26.8%), social gatherings, leisure (both 19.4%), and family outings (15.5%) were the main purposes for visits. Regarding dietary choices, a notable number of guests (53.9%) acknowledged religious food restrictions, with 51.9% stating that these taboos influenced their dining choices. Furthermore, a considerable majority (68.4%) aligned their food choices with traditional practices, underscoring the impact of cultural and religious beliefs on dining preferences in this setting.

**Association between Food Taboo and Food Consumption Behavior**

To determine the influence of food taboos on the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County, the researcher conducted a Chi-square test analysis, and the results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Influence of food taboos on food consumption behavior**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 8.980[a] | 1 | .003 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 9.139 | 1 | .002 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 8.951 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 310 |  |  |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 41.98.

The results in Table 1 show a significant association between food taboos and food consumption behavior of guests dining in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County ($\chi^2$=8.980, $p$=0.003).

Taboo significantly influences the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. This agrees with the conclusion made by Pellandini-Simányi (2014) that taboos regulate a wide array of practices and behavior. As a result, food preferences such as likes and dislikes of some food and specific patterns of food choices within a particular cultural group or regional group are formed.

The study tested the null hypothesis (**Ho$_1$**) that there is no significant influence of food taboos on the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. Since the p-value=0.003<0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis adopted that food taboos' significantly influence on food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County.

### 4.1 Cultural Beliefs and Food Consumption Behaviour

The study sought to assess cultural beliefs' influence on diners' food consumption behavior in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. This section presents descriptive results on cultural beliefs as a determinant of food consumption behavior. Chi-square results and the hypothesis testing results are also presented in this section. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on cultural beliefs as a determinant of food consumption behavior among guests dinning in 4 and 5-star hotels in Nairobi City County.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics on cultural beliefs**

| Statement | Response | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do you have a religious affiliation? | Yes | 219 | 70.6 |
| | No | 91 | 29.4 |
| Do you ever choose luxury restaurants in 4- & 5-star hotels as your preferred choice of eatery that offers your cultural foods? | Yes | 103 | 33.2 |
| | No | 207 | 66.8 |
| Do religious beliefs have some influence on the choice of food you eat? | Yes | 160 | 51.6 |
| | No | 150 | 48.4 |
| Do customary beliefs have some influence on the choice of food you eat? | Yes | 186 | 60.0 |
| | No | 124 | 40.0 |
| Do beliefs on healthy eating influence the choice of food you eat? | Yes | 198 | 63.9 |
| | No | 112 | 36.1 |
| Do perceptions about food have some influence on the choice of food you eat? | Yes | 111 | 35.8 |
| | No | 199 | 64.2 |
| Do beliefs on the food preparation method have some influence on the choice of food you eat? | Yes | 82 | 26.5 |
| | No | 228 | 73.5 |

The majority (70.6%) of the respondents had a religious affiliation, and most (66.8%) indicated that they do not choose luxury restaurants in 4 & 5-star hotels as their preferred eatery offering cultural foods. The majority (51.6%) of the respondents agreed that religious beliefs have some influence on the choice of food they eat, 60% agreed that customary beliefs have some influence on the selection of food they eat, while 63.9% agreed that beliefs on healthy eating have some influence on the choice of food they eat. The results further point out that most (64.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the fact that perceptions about food had some influence on the choice of food they eat.

Furthermore, it is evident that most of the guests (73.5%) were positive that beliefs on the food preparation method had no influence on their choice of food. This concurs with the findings of a study by Tunkkari (2020) which indicated that consumption behavior of guests is influenced by beliefs that guests may have acquired through learning.

**Cross-tabulation on cultural beliefs and food consumption behavior**

To determine the influence of cultural beliefs on the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County, the researcher conducted a Chi-square test analysis, and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Influence of Cultural Beliefs on Food Consumption Behavior**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 22.099[a] | 3 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 20.995 | 3 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.833 | 1 | .028 |
| N of Valid Cases | 310 |  |  |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.97.

The results in Table 3 show a significant association between cultural beliefs and food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County ($\chi^2$=22.099, $p$=0.000<0.05). This implies that cultural beliefs significantly influence the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. The results are consistent with the findings of Qoura and Ali (2018), which demonstrated that beliefs have an impact on food consumption in situations where some meals are forbidden, requiring specific techniques of preparation, or during periods of fasting or feasting. The guests hold divergent opinions regarding their dietary preferences when dining at eateries.

The study examined the null hypothesis (Ho2) which states that cultural beliefs do not have a substantial impact on the food consumption behaviour of diners in restaurants located in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. Given that the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a substantial impact of cultural ideas on the food consumption behaviour of diners at restaurants located in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County.

**4.2 Rituals and Food Consumption Behavior**

The study sought to assess the influence of rituals on the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. This section presents descriptive results on rituals as a cultural practice influencing food consumption behavior; chi-square results and the hypothesis testing results are also given. The respondents were asked to indicate the choice of foods they are concerned about when choosing menu items, and their responses were as shown in Figure 2.
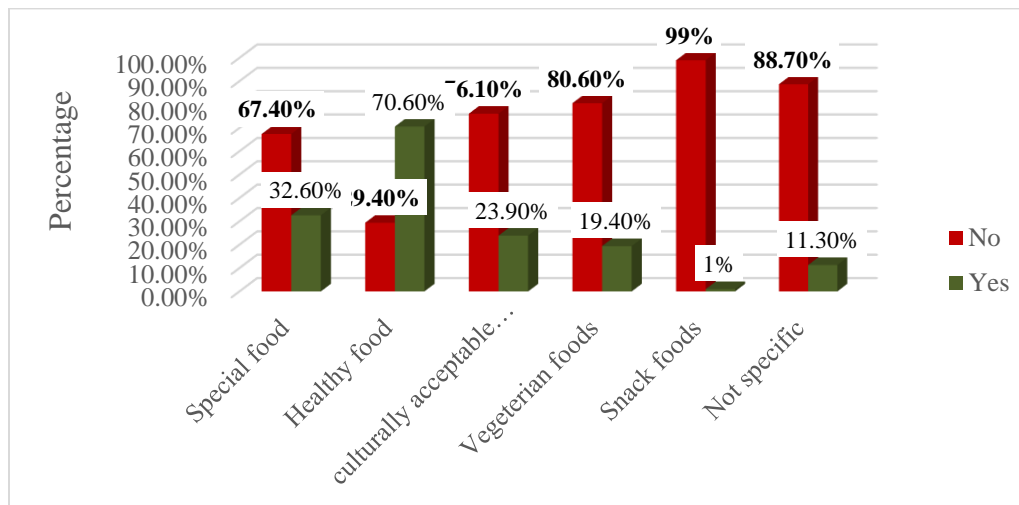
**Figure 2: Choice of Foods when Choosing Menu Items**

Based on the results in Figure 2, only 32.6% of the respondents considered special food while chasing menu items, while 67.4% were not concerned about special food. Regarding healthy foods, a majority (70.6%) agreed that they were worried about healthy foods when choosing menu items, while 29.4% were not concerned about healthy foods. Furthermore, 76.1% of the guests were not concerned about culturally acceptable foods, with only 23.9% indicating they were worried about them when choosing menu items.

It is further evident that most of the respondents (80.6%) were not concerned about vegetarian foods, 99% were not concerned about snack foods while 88.7% indicated that they did not have specifics when choosing menu items in the restaurant. These results imply that most of the guests dining out at 4 and 5 star hotels in Nairobi County are more concerned about healthy foods when choosing menu items than any other aspect. This is because healthy food is safe to eat, prevents harmful microbes that can cause severe infection from contaminating food, prevents cross-contamination, enables businesses to act according to the law, and protects their business reputation. The responses are presented in Figure 3.
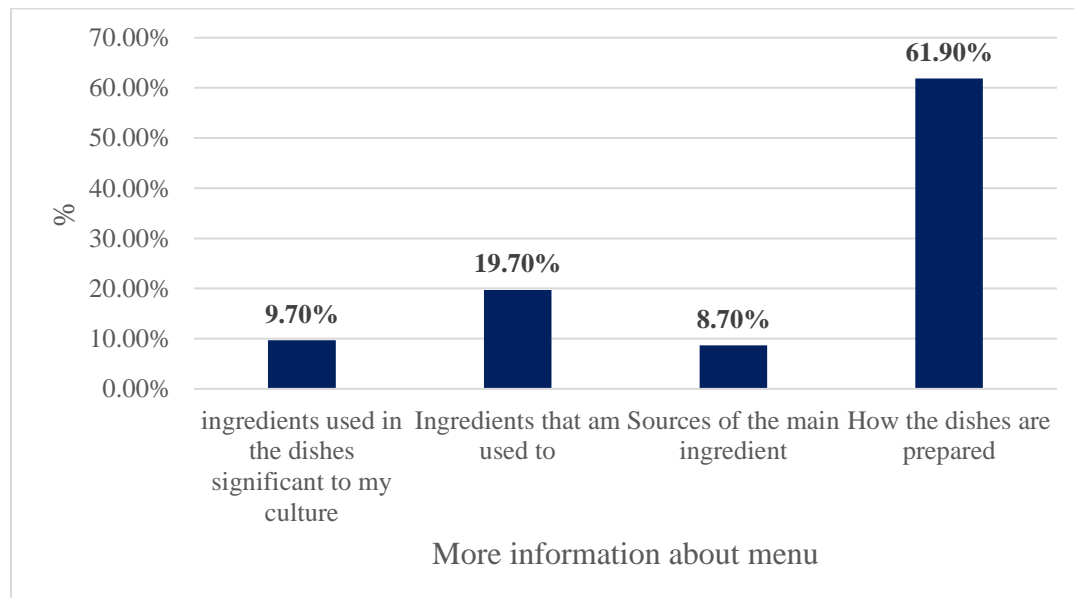
**Figure 3: More Information about the Menu**

Based on the results, the majority (61.9%) of the respondents would have preferred that the information on how the dishes were prepared were given more emphasis to ensure their food preferences were satisfactorily met. The results also show that 19.7% of the guests would have liked that the information on ingredients they are used to was given more emphasis, 9.7% needed more information on ingredients used in the dishes that are significant to their culture, while 8.7% required more information on sources of the main ingredients. This implies that most of the guests dining at 4 and 5-star hotels in Nairobi would like more emphasis to be given to providing more information on the method of food preparation. According to Almerico (2014), there are culture-specific behaviors to particular foods which can be depicted in restaurants that illustrate the cultural expectation of eating food, such as the manner of eating (e.g., use of fork or chopsticks), the order of serving food (e.g., chronological menu sequence), the etiquette of eating, and the particular choice of foods suitable for specific individuals or certain times.

Table 4 shows more descriptive statistics on rituals as a cultural practice influencing food consumption behavior among guests dinning in 4 and 5-star hotels in Nairobi City County.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Rituals**

| Statement | Response | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do you celebrate special occasions from time to time repeatedly? | Yes | 257 | 82.9 |
|  | No | 53 | 17.1 |
| Do you have any special recipes/foods that has been inherited from your ancestral family? | Yes | 100 | 32.3 |
|  | No | 210 | 67.7 |
| Is the most typical and popular meal in your family passed down from your ancestral connection | Yes | 143 | 46.1 |
|  | No | 167 | 53.9 |
| There is a specific food/ foods consumed on a particular ceremonial occasion | Yes | 254 | 81.9 |
|  | No | 56 | 18.1 |
| The cultural requirements for specific occasion dictate food choice | Yes | 237 | 76.5 |
|  | No | 73 | 23.5 |
| Food choice and consumption behavior is in accordance with traditional practices | Yes | 212 | 68.4 |
|  | No | 98 | 31.6 |

Based on the descriptive analysis results in Table 4, the study established that most (82.9%) of the respondents agreed that they celebrate special occasions from time to time repeatedly, 81.9% agreed that there is a specific food/ foods consumed on particular ceremonial occasion, 76.5% indicated that the cultural requirements for specific occasion dictate food choice, while 68.4% agreed that food choice and consumption behaviour is in accordance with traditional practices. Furthermore, most (67.7%) of the respondents did not have any special recipes/foods that had been inherited from their ancestral family. Finally, most (53.9%) respondents denied that the most typical and popular meal in their families was passed down from family connections. These findings imply that the various celebrations people have are a typical manifestation of rituals. This is supported by Raji *et al.* (2017), indicating that cultural ritual practices can be observed through ceremonies involving preparation, cooking, serving, and the consumption of food.

**Cross-tabulation on Rituals and Food Consumption Behavior**

To determine the influence of rituals on the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County, the researcher conducted a Chi-square test analysis and the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Influence of Rituals on Food Consumption Behaviour**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5.361[a] | 1 | .021 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 5.735 | 1 | .017 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 5.344 | 1 | .021 |
| N of Valid Cases | 310 |  |  |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.55.

The results in Table 5 show a significant association between rituals and food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County ($\chi2=5.361$, $p=0.021<0.05$). This implies that rituals significantly influence the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County. This is in line with Wang and Gino (2018) that "rituals influence consumption behavior by regulating the slaughter, preparation, and consumption of food and beverages, setting some foods aside for special occasions and feasts." The study examined the null hypothesis (Ho3) which states that there is no significant impact of rituals on the food intake behaviour of diners in restaurants located in 4-5 star hotels in Nairobi County. Given that the p-value is 0.021, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, we can conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected.

## 4.3 The influence of the decision-making process on the relationship between cultural practices and consumption behavior

The fourth objective of the study was to determine the influence of the decision-making process on the relationship between cultural practices and consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in the four and five-star hotels in Nairobi County. The results are presented in Figure 3.
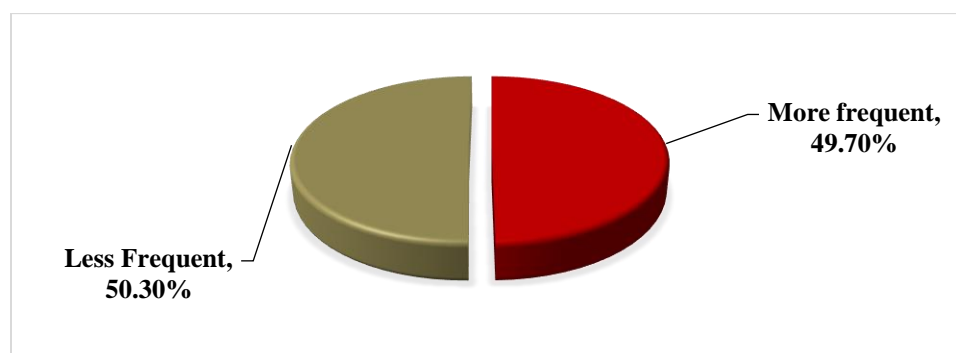


**Figure 4: Eating Traditional Cultural-Specific Food**

Slightly more than half of the respondents (50.3%) indicated that they were eating traditional cultural-specific food of their ethnic affiliation less often, compared with 49.7% who were eating traditional cultural-specific food of their ethnic affiliation more frequently. This implies that restaurant guests make their choices mirrored around their associations. This is supported by assertions that guests are likely to express their individual experiences as a reflection of their cultural backgrounds pointed out by (Ogunnaike *et al.* (2022).

**Frequency of Visiting Specific Restaurants that Sell Cultural Food**

The respondents were also asked to indicate how often they visited specific restaurants that sell their cultural food instead of going to any nearby eateries near them to establish their loyalty towards the restaurants that provided the dining experience aligned with their cultural practices and preferences. Their responses were as shown in Figure 5.
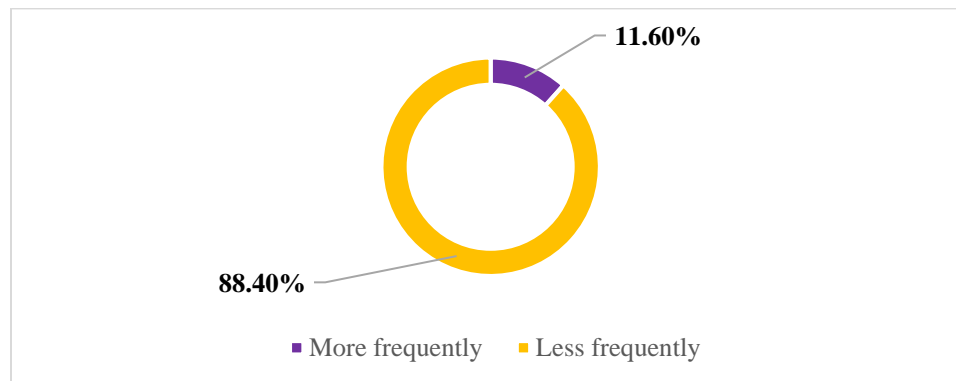
**Figure 5: Frequency of Visiting Specific Restaurants**

Based on the results in Figure 5, a majority (88.4%) of the guests were less frequently visiting specific restaurants that sell their cultural food instead of going to any eateries that are near them. This implies that most respondents visited specific restaurants sometimes. The results, however, show that 11.6% were visiting distinctive restaurants that sell their cultural food instead of going to any eateries that are near them more frequently. Choice of restaurants in 4- & 5-Star Hotels. The researcher asked the respondents to indicate if they ever choose restaurants in 4 & 5-star hotels as their preferred choice of eatery that offer their cultural foods or not. The results are in Figure 6.
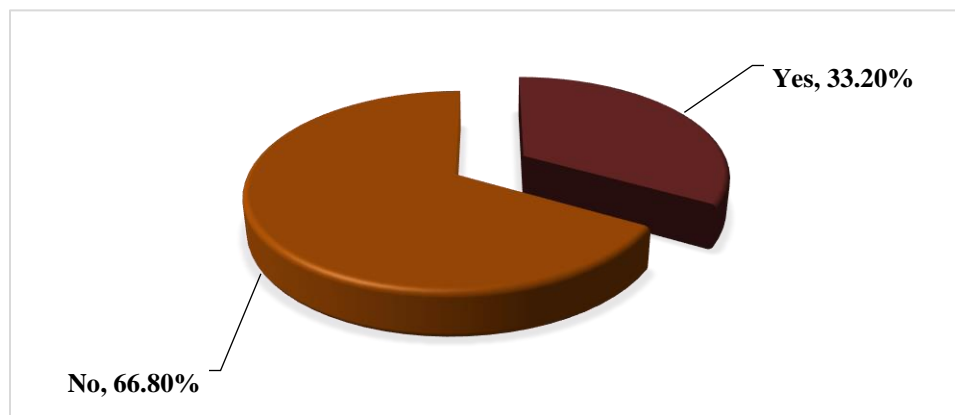


**Figure 6: Choice of restaurants in 4- & 5-Star Hotels**

Based on the results in Figure 6, the majority (66.8%) of the respondents had not chosen the category of restaurants in 4 & 5-star hotels as their preferred choice of eatery that offer their cultural foods, while 33.2% agreed that they had chosen restaurants in 4 & 5-star hotels as their preferred choice of eatery that offer their cultural foods.

**The Decision of Food to Eat**

The respondents were further asked to indicate how they decided on the food to eat when a menu card was offered. The responses are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Decision of Food to Eat**

| Decision | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| I take time to go through the menu | 270 | 87.1 |
| I choose the same menu item every time | 24 | 7.7 |
| I prefer a recommendation from someone | 5 | 1.6 |
| I choose something new for me | 11 | 3.5 |
| **Total** | **310** | **100** |

A majority (87.1%) of the respondents pointed out that they were taking time to go through the menu when a menu card is offered, 7.7% were choosing the same menu item every time they visited the restaurant, 3.5% were choosing something new to me, while 1.6% preferred recommendation from someone to settle on what tom eat whenever they visited the restaurant. Individuals have their preferences regarding menu choices that cultural practices may impact. With the increase in dietary restrictions and healthy considerations, customers are taking a closer look at the menu's constituents owing to health-related beliefs that have directly and positively impacted behavior and purchase intentions (Fwaya & Kambaga, 2021).

To determine the influence of the decision-making process on the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County, the researcher conducted a Chi-square test analysis, and the results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Influence of Decision-Making Process on Food Consumption Behaviour**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.553[a] | 3 | .213 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.556 | 3 | .212 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.548 | 1 | .213 |
| N of Valid Cases | 310 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 51.17.

The results in Table 7 show an insignificant association between the decision-making process and food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County ($\chi^2$=1.553, $p$=0.213>0.05). This implies that the decision-making process does not significantly influence the food consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County. This is because not all decisions can lead to the purchase of products or services offered, owing to the decision-making process is a complex matter that has many factors affecting consumer decisions (Wei *et al.,* 2021).

**4.4 Moderating effect of the Decision-Making Process**

To assess the moderating influence of the decision-making process on the relationship between cultural practices and consumption behavior of diners in restaurants in the hotels rated as four and five star in Nairobi County, the researcher interacted with each independent variable with

decision-making process (moderator) to obtain composite variables (food taboos*decision making process, cultural beliefs*decision making process and rituals*decision making process) which were then cross-tabulated with the dependent variable food consumption behavior. The results are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: The moderating effect of Decision-Making Process**

| Dependent Variable | Interaction | Cross Tabulation | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Chi-square Value | P-value |
| Food consumption behavior | Food taboos*decision making process | 16.687 | 0.001 |
| Food consumption behavior | Cultural beliefs*decision making process | 14.168 | 0.004 |
| Food consumption behavior | Rituals *decision-making process | 26.220 | 0.000 |

The results in table 8 show a significant association between the interaction between food taboos and the decision-making process and the dependent variable food consumption behavior ($\chi^2$=16.687, *p*=0.001<0.05).

There was a significant association between cultural beliefs, the decision-making process, and the dependent variable food consumption behavior ($\chi^2$=14.168, *p*=0.004<0.05). Finally, the results show that the interaction between rituals and decision-making was significantly associated with food consumption behavior ($\chi^2$=26.220, *p*=0.000<0.05).

The hypothesis (Ho4) was tested using a chi-square test, and the findings are presented in Table 8. The acceptance or rejection criterion was based on the p-value being less than 0.05. If the p-value met this condition, the null hypothesis was rejected; otherwise, it was not rejected. The study examined the null hypothesis (Ho4) which states that there is no significant impact of the decision-making process on the correlation between cultural practices and consumption behaviour of customers in four and five-star rated hotels in Nairobi County. Given that the p-values of the interacted variables were below 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

## 4.5 Food Consumption Behavior of Guests Dining in 4–5-Star Hotels

The dependent variable was the food consumption behavior of guest dining in 4–5-star hotels in Nairobi County. Based on the findings, most of the respondents (73.2%) indicated that a diverse menu, incorporating both local and international dishes, was crucial in catering to the varied cultural preferences of the guests. Most of them (68.3%) also indicated that both local and international patrons particularly appreciated the inclusion of traditional Kenyan dishes, as it displayed the country's rich culinary heritage. Moreover, guests with specific dietary requirements, driven by their cultural or religious beliefs, valued the availability of options that catered to their needs (77.4%). Thus, a well-curated menu that considers the cultural practices of guests plays a

vital role in shaping their food consumption behavior and overall satisfaction while dining in high-end hotels in Nairobi.

The study further found out that food preferences were strongly influenced by cultural backgrounds (80.6%). The majority (79.5%) of the respondents indicated a significant preference for food aligned with their cultural or traditional dietary practices. For instance, local guests often favored dishes incorporating staple Kenyan ingredients or following traditional cooking methods. Similarly, most (66.8%) respondents pointed out that international guests gravitated towards offerings that catered to their cultural tastes or offered a familiar culinary experience. Furthermore, food preferences were also influenced by cultural dietary restrictions or religious beliefs (57.4%).

Regarding food etiquette, guests from various cultural backgrounds brought different expectations and norms around dining etiquette. Most respondents (83.6%) indicated that they appreciate communal eating or using hands for specific dishes, as these are common practices in some Kenyan cultures. Moreover, certain cultural norms around the timing and pacing of meals also influenced guests' satisfaction (54.7%). Therefore, understanding and respecting these diverse food etiquettes while maintaining a high standard of service proved crucial in enhancing the overall dining experience of guests in these high-end hotels.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings presented in the preceding chapters, the study concludes that contemporary food consumption behaviors are influenced by numerous cultural factors, contributing to a diverse range of food choices. This phenomenon is observed worldwide, reflecting varying gastronomic needs and preferences, which play a crucial role in expressing the culture and values of distinct groups and communities. Moreover, the study emphasizes that on a global scale, the multitude of races and nations encapsulates a rich array of cultures, each characterized by unique culinary traditions and serving practices, significantly shaping food preferences within the broader hospitality environment.

The study concludes that women are restricted from consuming specific foods as a result of ethnic or cultural convictions and prohibitions, which may encompass foods abundant in micronutrients. Food taboos are universally recognized as a structured set of regulations that dictate which foods or combinations of foods are forbidden to consume in each given human society. In some cases, taboos dictate the choice of food to eat while dining out in the restaurant, while in some cases, taboos do not dictate the choice of food to eat while dining out in the restaurant. Moreover, most of the respondents agreed that food choice and consumption behavior were following traditional practices, while others believed that food choice and consumption behavior were not in accordance with traditional practices.

Special food is one of the major factors considered by most guests dining at 4 and 5-star hotels in Nairobi County. Most respondents are considering special food while choosing menu items, while others are not at all concerned about special food. Regarding healthy foods, most guests dining in hotels rated as 4 and 5 stars in Nairobi City County are concerned about healthy foods when choosing menu items. Furthermore, most guests dining at 4 and 5-star hotels are concerned about culturally acceptable foods. Similarly, most of the respondents of the respondents were not concerned about vegetarian foods; most of guests dining at 4 and 5-star hotels in the city are not concerned about snack foods, while others have no specifics when choosing menu items in the restaurant. The study thus concludes that most of the guests dining out at 4 and 5-star hotels in

Nairobi County are more concerned about healthy foods when choosing menu items than any other aspect.

## 6.0 Recommendations

According to the findings and conclusions, the study suggests that professionals in 4 and 5-star hotels should consider the cultural aspect while designing menus in order to achieve a harmonious alignment between the catering policy, financial policy, and marketing strategy. Hence, it is imperative for culinary training schools in the country to incorporate cultural elements into their training programmes. This will enable future hotel staff to acquire a wide range of cultural knowledge, enabling them to effectively cater to the different cultural demands of the hospitality industry.

The study further recommends to the management of hotels rated as 4 and 5 stars in Nairobi City County that, they should strive to factor in the issue of cultural beliefs and taboos in their menus so that those from the cultural backgrounds that consider certain food taboo to eat can be accommodated. To the policymakers, the study recommends that the syllabus of hospitality colleges and institutions in the country should be revised to suit the need of the industry such that the professionals produced by such institutions can ones that recognize that their clients belong to diverse cultures. The study also recommends to the managers of hotels in Nairobi City County and, by extension, the whole of Kenya that their menus should be prepared with full knowledge of religious issues influencing food consumption behavior.

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