

Food Purchase Decisions: The Influence of Food Quality and Safety

¹Tibiri Mercy Azuma, ²Beatrice Naa Adjeley Quao, ³Gifty Osiakwa Adwoa Christabel,

¹Bolgatanga Girls' SHS Box 60, Bolgatanga-Ghana

^{2,3}Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Sunyani Technical University, Box 206, Sunyani-Ghana
Corresponding Author: Email: comfortserwaa843@gmail.com

Abstract: *Purchasing intention is the probability that customers in a certain purchasing situation choose a certain brand of a product category. This is related with consumers' behaviour, perception and their attitude. Purchasing behaviour is an important key point for consumers during considering and evaluating of certain product. The aim of the study was to evaluate the factors influencing consumers' food purchase decisions in relation to food quality and safety. The researchers used qualitative research approach for the study. A sample size of 500 respondents was involved in the study. Questionnaire was used in collecting the data. A simple random sampling technique was used to select men and women who purchase food stuffs in the Tafo municipality, Kumasi. This method was used because it ensured that everyone in the population had an equal chance of being selected. Results from the data collected were analyzed using Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16. Chi-square test for statistical significance of association and ANOVA were used where applicable. Graphical representation was by Microsoft Excel. The study portrayed that 80% of the respondents agreed that their purchase decision is highly influenced by both quality and safety attributes of food. As to whether consumers perceive price to confer quality, it was seen that price is not an important attribute in determining quality since price (3.52) recorded a low mean value. It was recommended that regulators of food vending ought to intensify and strengthen education on food safety and quality so that people appreciate the need for healthy eating.*

Keywords: Purchasing intention, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Name, Food Quality and Safety.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purchase decision refers to a plan to purchase an exact product or service in the future (commercial enterprise Dictionary.com 2010). In any such selection to buy products and offerings, producers or sellers must first discover some way to transmit product information to the latent customers. Fitzsimons and Morwitz (1996) confirmed that measuring choices affect which brands consumer buy. Buying decision can be categorised as one of the mechanism of consumers' cognitive conduct on how unique they intend to purchase a selected product. Laroche Zhou (1996) argues that variables along with purchaser deliberation in shopping a brand and hope to purchase a product may be used to decide customer purchase choice. These deliberation elements can consist of the client's involvement, facts and evaluation as part of the entire method in influential purchase motive.

When consumers want to buy a product, a brand name can come to their minds at once; it reflects that product has higher brand awareness. Consumers' purchase decision can be influenced if a product has higher brand awareness (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991; Grewal, Monroe and Krishnan, 1998). This explains why a product with higher brand awareness will have higher market share and better quality evaluation. Growing consumer awareness has made customers to purchase their familiar and favourable brand. Consequently, if groups need to defeat their competitors, they need to make purchasers love to buy their merchandise and types. Macdonald and Sharp (2000) mention that even though clients familiarize and are willing to purchase a product, brand attention remains an essential element to

influence purchase choice. Clients' purchase decision can be stimulated if a product has better emblem consciousness.

Purchasing intention is the probability that customers in a certain purchasing situation choose a certain brand of a product category (Crosno et al., 2009). The awareness of marketing scholars on purchase intentions drives from its relation to purchase behaviour. Consumers' alternative of shopping for might be terribly complicated. Generally, buying intention is related to buyers' behaviour, belief and their mind-set. Purchase behaviour is a very important key for shoppers within the course of wondering and evaluating the assured product (Keller, 2001).

Ghosh (1990) expressed that purchase purpose may be a powerful tool used in predicting buying method. Once the purchasers arrange to get the merchandise in sure save, they are driven by exploitation of their intentions. However, purchase goal is perhaps altered by fee, best perception and value (Zeithaml, 1988) and Grewal et al (1998). Similarly, shoppers might be interrupted by manner of internal impulse and out of doors surroundings throughout shopping method. Their behaviour could be pushed by the physiological motivation that stimulates their reply that carries them to the outlet to fulfill their needs (Kim and Jin, 2001).

The health of the client has become an awfully vital pursuit as they move more or less picking the meals they consume. This comes as a result of the numerous pronounced cases of food borne diseases being recorded within the country. The total number of out-patients reported with food borne diseases in Republic of Ghana is 420,000 per year with high degree of annual loss of life rate expected at 65000 and

overall price to the economy at US\$69million (Graphic business, 2010). Different figures give a total number of 84,000 deaths per yr. with 25 percent being youngsters under 5 years, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2010). In sight of those, purchasers are literally inquisitive about picking foods that is secured as an extended manner as their fitness is concerned. Consumers’ purchase behaviour is being directed toward picking secure and glorious meals since safe and quality food is void health risk. The problem with customer’s preference to buy secured and exceptional meals however lies within the reality that clients discover it hard to decide on the point of purchase what a safe and/or best foods is. It is far in this regard that, the researchers seek to find out approximately purchasers’ perception of quality and how it influences their choice of meals on the point of purchase.

2. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCES CONSUMERS’ PURCHASE INTENTION

2.1 Extrinsic and Intrinsic Factors of the Product

Extrinsic is defined as not an inherent part of the thing or not contain in something (Free Analysis shows that adventitious cues play a very important role in influencing consumers’ purchase intention than intrinsic cues (Richardson, 1997). Adventitious factors of the merchandise embrace 'perceived value, packaging, store image, and advertisement. Previous studies expressed that shopper intention is influenced by financial price (Grunert et al, 2004). Additionally, Munusamy and Wong (2008) established that there is a major positive relationship between value and consumers’ motives towards purchase of personal products. Therefore, the bulk of shoppers can create their call by referring on low value product (Boutsouki et al., 2008).

Intrinsic factor is related to the physical product characteristics where it includes perceived quality, risk and value. Food safety is an important issue nowadays, where people are more concern on the safety of the product especially those related to food product. Risk is due to a mistake or uncertainty. Uncertainty happens due to the appearance of the product. Consumers always think that purchasing a low price, simple packaging and even less-well known product are highly risky because the quality of those products are of lack of confidence and doubtful (Sudhir and Talukdar, 2004). That is the reason why consumers perceive labeled product as high-risk products. Because most of the consumers are not so familiar with such product (Cox, 1967)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: The influence of quality and safety on food purchase decision

Item	Male n(%)	Female n(%)	Total n(%)	Chi-square value (χ^2) ^a
Choices influencing purchase decision				
Choice based on quality and safety	155(32.9)	222(47.1)	377(80.0)	
Choice based on quality only	20(4.2)	23(4.9)	43(9.1)	
Choice based on safety only	15(3.2)	11(2.3)	26(5.5)	
Choice not influenced by food quality	0(0.0)	4(0.8)	4(0.8)	
Choice not influenced by food safety	6(1.3)	10(2.1)	16(3.4)	

and they do not understand the product very well, therefore afraid of making wrong decision (Batra and Sinha, 2000). Consumers usually maximize their utility of the product they purchase by avoiding mistake. On that basis, manufacturer branded products which are higher in price are always perceived to be high quality product with lower risk and hence, they will always use price and brand to determine the quality of the product.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers used qualitative research approach for the study. Harwell (2011) described qualitative research as inductive, where the researchers may construct theories, explanations, and conceptualizations from details provided by a participant which the researchers cannot ignore their experiences, perceptions, and biases to the research. This design was selected due to the fact that it helped the researchers to find out about consumers’ opinions of food safety and quality and how it affects their purchasing decisions.

A sample size of 500 respondents was involved in the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select men and women who purchase food stuffs in the Tafo municipality, Kumasi. This method was used because it ensured that everyone in the population had an equal chance of being selected. The goal of the sampling method used was to obtain a sample that is a representative of the population. This research is a quantitative research where sources of information were gathered from questionnaires. This is because surveys that collect quantitative data can be easier to complete for the sample, due to the basic layout which enables participants to answer the questionnaire quickly, as the responses require only a tick or a numerical response as opposed to a written response. The instrument utilized was through a self-administered questionnaire containing closed-ended and scales to matrix questions. A four point Likert scale was used where “1” represented “strongly disagree”, in some questions, “extremely unimportant” and “4” represented “strongly agree “ or “extremely important.” This study is a descriptive study which is interested in describing the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. Results from the data collected on the study were analyzed using Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16. Graphical representation was by Microsoft Excel.

Choice based on neither quality nor safety	4(0.8)	0(0.0)	4(0.8)	12.309(0.055)
Interrelationship between quality and safety				
Quality and safety are the same	42(8.9)	66(14.9)	108(22.9)	
Quality and safety are related	81(17.2)	111(23.5)	192(40.7)	
Quality implies safety	56(11.9)	32 (6.8)	88(18.7)	
Safety implies quality	11 (2.3)	31 (5.6)	42(8.9)	
Quality and safety are unrelated	12 (2.5)	29 (6.1)	41(8.7)	27.263(0.001)

Statistically significant at 0.05 level

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

Table 1 on the other hand gives a representation of purchasing decision which is influenced by educational level of respondents. From the table three of the attributes (expiry date, appearance and food temperature) were not significantly associated with level of education. Though expiry date was not significant almost all the respondents agreed that it very important thing they look out for before

purchasing the food. Those with tertiary level of education were however indifferent, they were neutral to this effect and this could be that they are aware that not all food would have the expiry dates on them, so they see they would consider. Again while the uneducated were neutral for taste of food, those with basic secondary and tertiary level of education maintained that taste of food was a very important factor they consider before buying foods.

Table 2: Purchasing decision based on educational level

Attributes	Educational level of respondents				(χ^2)
	Uneducated	Basic	Secondary	Tertiary	
Taste	3.14	4.56	4.28	4.56	95.57 (0.000)
Expiry date	4.00	4.17	4.11	3.98	11.48 (0.075)
Good aroma	4.15	4.09	3.01	3.27	44.05 (0.000)
Appearance	4.08	4.21	3.11	3.91	20.52 (0.058)
Nutritional value	2.17	3.21	4.54	4.58	47.73 (0.000)
Price	4.71	4.66	4.52	2.21	93.79 (0.000)
Cleanliness of food service area	4.09	4.78	4.00	4.95	45.04 (0.000)
Covered food	4.14	4.44	4.85	4.50	50.52 (0.000)
Food temperature	1.23	2.78	4.07	4.10	11.12 (0.076)
Serving equipment	1.00	3.67	3.01	4.99	78.87 (0.000)
Health status of food handler	4.91	4.35	4.88	5.01	97.81 (0.000)

1=Not Important at all; 2=Not Important; 3=Neutral; 4=Important; 5 = Very Important

Significantly significant at 0.05 level

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

Moreover in table 2, while all the respondents stated cleanliness of food service area and price were important factors they consider before purchasing food, respondent with some tertiary level of education hinted price was not as important in their purchasing decision. This is on the premise that most of the tertiary student or graduate are working and as a result could afford any price thus they turn to consider other factor important than the price of the food. The uneducated and those with basic level of education perceived good aroma as very important factor while the

respondent with secondary and tertiary were neutral. Perhaps not every thing that glitters may be gold, in the sense that good aroma may be triggered by some spices or food additives which in reality may pose health threats. Again almost all the respondent gave a resounding agreement that covering of foods and health status of food handlers were important attributes they consider before making purchasing decision.

Table 3: Factors considered before making purchasing decisions

Attributes	Respondent's occupation				(χ^2)
	Unemployed	Self employed	Government worker	Private worker	
Taste	4.67	3.10	4.10	4.55	80.01 (0.000)
Expiry date	4.50	4.67	4.13	4.72	10.02 (0.124)
Good aroma	4.13	4.00	4.11	3.82	79.73 (0.000)
Appearance	2.88	4.17	3.26	3.98	91.26 (0.000)
Nutritional value	3.03	2.44	2.51	4.10	12.78 (0.071)
Price	4.15	3.52	2.12	3.04	75.40 (0.000)
Cleanliness of food service area	5.00	4.71	4.99	4.74	59.07 (0.000)
Covered food	3.98	4.91	4.99	5.00	91.29 (0.000)
Food temperature	2.22	2.19	3.47	4.76	13.99 (0.075)
Serving equipment	2.00	2.90	3.97	2.01	13.41 (0.081)
Health status of food handler	3.07	3.00	3.35	4.00	28.94 (0.004)

1=Not Important at all; 2=Not Important; 3=Neutral; 4=Important; 5 = Very Important

Significantly significant at 0.05 level

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

Table 3 is similar to that of Table 2 just that here it is a cross tabulation between the attributes and respondent's occupation. In the table, all the respondents whether employed, self employed or not were of the view that taste of food, expiry dates on foods and cleanliness of food service area were important factors or attribute they consider before purchasing any food. From the table four attribute were not significantly associated or related with respondent's occupation. Eventhough the nutritional value was not significant, worker of the private sector see it to be a very important attribute or factor they consider. Moreover though price of the food was found to be significantly related to respondent's occupation as far as food purchasing decision was concerned, only the unemployed respondent saw it as an important factor to purchasing decisions. This is probably all the other sub-groups have a regular source of income they depend on.

Again, characteristically while the employed saw covering of food as an important factor, the unemployed saw no problem with covering of foods. This also could stem from the fact that the unemployed are always handicap by money and so whatever they find they buy oblivious of the health implications thereof. Not only that with exception of those working in the private sector, none of other respondents saw temperature of food and health status of food handler as important attribute they consider before making any purchasing decisions. Cleanliness of food service area was recognised by all the respondents to be a very important attribute or factor whenever making food purchasing

decisions. Again none of the respondents mentioned serving equipment as an important attributes they look for before buying any food. Generally these attribute were looked at because they either constitute food safety or food quality in its entirety.

According to Boutsouki et al. (2008) the majority of consumers would make their decision by referring on low price product. Ampuero and Vila (2006) also opined that, packaging was important because it reaches almost all consumers, therefore it is an important factor in the decision-making process, and consumer usually examined product by looking at the information provided on the packaging. They may also appeal to the consumers eyes. Furthermore, advertisement acts as communicator where it informs consumers about the product and service (Uusitalo, 2001). Again most consumers played down on the issues of branding before buying food. They think that brand of food does not affect a consumers purchasing decisions. This opposed the views or assertions of Franz-Rudolf Esch et al. (2006) that current purchases of customers are affected by brand knowledge and it was found that brand image had direct effect on customer purchases and brand awareness had indirect effect on customer purchases. Study by Soethoudt et al, (2012) emphasized that stigma created around products with expired date influences consumer behaviour. Food that has not passed its expiration date is accepted; whilst food that has reached its expiration date is thrown away without smelling or tasting

Table 4: Cross tabulation of food safety attributes and educational level

Attributes	Educational level of respondents				(χ^2)
	Uneducated	Basic	Secondary	Tertiary	
Taste	4.75	4.57	3.62	3.00	68.55 (0.000)
Natural/organic	1.5	2.86	3.10	1.95	59.42 (0.000)
Freshness	3.32	4.00	4.48	3.01	50.25 (0.000)
Appearance	4.57	3.11	2.03	3.51	57.57 (0.000)
Best before date	4.71	4.57	4.69	5.00	40.24 (0.000)
Brand	2.22	3.14	2.91	4.53	98.15 (0.000)
Price	1.43	2.00	3.15	1.53	1.48 (0.534)
Country of origin	3.24	4.11	3.08	3.41	6.42 (0.022)
Packaging material	4.52	4.65	4.36	4.78	95.34 (0.000)
Hygienic condition	4.55	4.61	5.00	5.00	28.21 (0.005)

[1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree] Significantly Significant at 0.05 level

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

For appearance of food, only the uneducated respondents considered it to be a food safety attribute, the others with basic education, secondary and tertiary education disagreed to this assertion. This may be stemmed from the fact that the education they may have had, had exposed them to keen knowledge to rather make decision on this. As a characteristic of educated people, expiry date on food is very crucial as far as the safety and quality of that product is concerned. From table 4 it was significant and also all the respondents strongly agreed that ‘best before date’ or expiry date was an attribute of food safety.

On the part of brand, none of the respondents agreed that brand is a food safety attribute though it was significantly associated with level of education. Again, none of the respondents agreed that price of food was a food safety attribute and this was evident by the probability value of the chi-square test not being significant. Normally people from the developing countries hold the perception that products from advanced countries are safe and of high quality, result on table 4 proved otherwise. Example Ghanaians believe that product from UK, USA and other developed countries come with quality. From table 4, all the respondents except those with basic level of education who agreed that country of origin was an attribute of safety and quality, the rest were

indifferent on this matter. That is they are not certain country of origin of a product would connote quality and safety of the product.

Moreover on Table 4, respondents believed that the packaging material and hygienic condition of food were indeed food safety and quality attributes. All the respondents with whatever educational background they had attained were strongly of the view that packaging material of a certain product would connote safety and quality of that product. This may stem from the fact that products with nice and attractive packages and with inscriptions legibly labelled may seem to be of good quality and also safe though it may be arguable. Similarly, respondent strongly agreed to the fact that a product with good hygienic condition then it means the product is safe and of good quality. Thus respondents maintained that hygienic condition was an attributes of food safety and quality. This observation contradicts the study of Boutsouki et al. (2008) that the majority of consumers would make their decision by referring on low price product. Results on the table also support the study of Ampuero and Vila (2006) that consumers from whatever educational background give priority to taste of food, packing material of food, hygienic conditions, expiry dates of food, appearance and price before buying or making purchasing decisions

Table 5: Important Attributes of Food Quality and Safety to Consumer

Item	Male (mean)	Female (mean)	Overall mean	Chi-square value (χ^2)
Ingredients	4.30	4.55	4.43	7.395 (0.001)
Taste	4.03	4.43	4.23	18.232 (0.001)
Appearance	4.13	4.36	4.25	6.174 (0.003)
Expiry date	4.84	4.80	4.82	0.177 (0.398)
Good smell	4.13	4.37	3.50	6.646 (0.004)
Nutritional value	4.65	4.54	3.94	1.331 (0.059)
Price	3.42	3.58		3.108 (0.134)
Texture	3.89	3.98		0.888 (0.394)

[1=Not Important at all; 2=Not Important; 3=Neutral; 4=Important; 5 = Very Important]

Significantly significant at 0.05 level

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

Respondents were asked to present their opinions on what they value much as attribute of both quality and safe food. Given eight items as a compromise of the two (safety and quality), the respondents mean responses were presented in Table 5. The results give indications that the most important attribute respondent consider were taste (4.23), appearance (4.25), expiry dates (4.82), good smell or good aroma (4.425), nutritional value(4.60) and ingredient(4.443) in foods. These observations very much support the views of Grunert (2005) that interest of consumers mostly evolved around issues concerning organic production of food, animal welfare and the use of genetically modified organisms in producing food. It moreover confirms the study of Naspetti and Zanoli (2009) that some characteristics of food quality that consumers consider were taste, appearance and smell are used to constitute a central dimension of quality for most consumers.

Surprisingly price of food was relegated to the bottom log of all the attribute consumers or respondent deem important. Texture of food was however not recognised by respondent as important factors considered before making any decision as far as food purchases are concerned. Results also reveal that mean responses of male were not statistically different from that of the females. Again though attribute such as expiry dates and nutritional value of foods were not significant, respondent whether males or females maintained they were quite important factors. These results contradicts the assertion of Acebrón and Dopico (2000) that consumers considers certain attribute such as price and expiry dates when the foods are packaged before buying food from food joints. Again, according to Zeithaml, (1988); Grewal et al. (1998) purchase intention of consumers might be altered by the influence of price, quality perception and value perception.

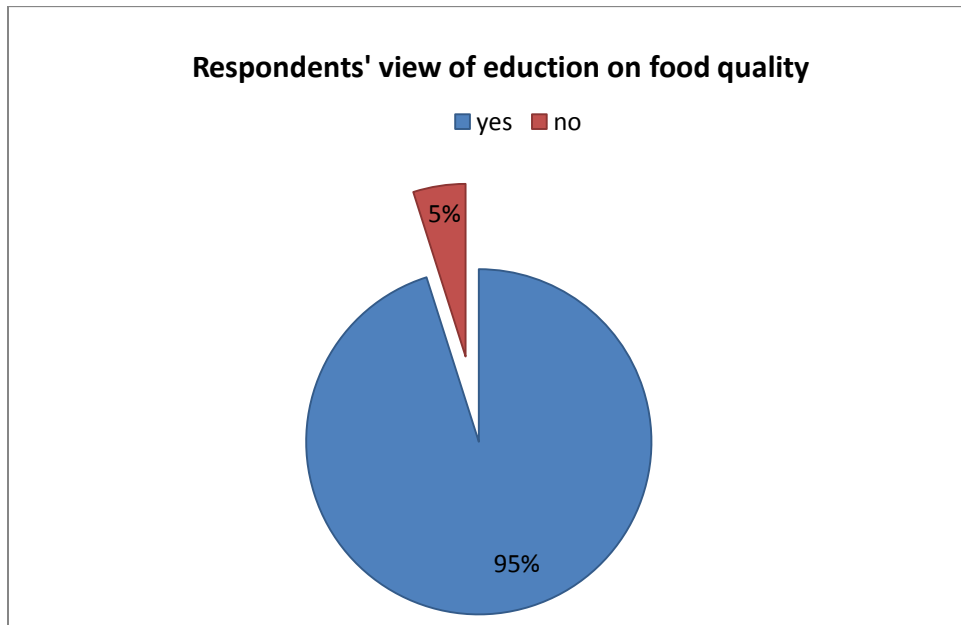


Figure 1: Respondents view of Education on Food Quality

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

Figure 1 gives a pictorial representation of the need or essences of education of respondents on the quality of food. Respondents were asked whether consumers should be educated on food quality of which respondents overwhelmingly responded positively to with a 95.1% affirmation. This was an indication that knowledge on food quality and safety by consumers must be of a priority to both seller and producers. This however confirms the study of Franz-Rudolf Esch et al. (2006) that current purchases of customers are affected by brand knowledge and found that brand image has direct effect on customer purchases.

Relationship Consumers' attach to Price of Food and Quality

In this section, the study found the relationship between quality and price. The intention was to really test whether price of a commodity connote the quality of it. Thus logistic regression together with a correlational matrix were done to ascertain the effect and even moreove the direction of the relationship.

Table 6: Estimates of Logistic Regression Results

Item	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Expiry date	-.101	.193	.272	1	.602	.904
Price	.105	.080	1.697	1	.193	1.110
Hygienic condition	-.296	.160	3.451	1	.063	.743
Constant	1.831	1.198	2.336	1	.126	6.237

Variable(s) entered on step 1: Expiry date, Price, Hygienic condition.

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

The dependent variable was the “incident that motivate you to be more concern about food safety and quality”, while the independent variable include price, expiry date and hygienic condition. From table 11, it was realised that price of food does significantly affect quality of food. This thus indicates

that price does not connote quality of food. Again none of the variables were significant in explaining quality of food though they all passed the Wald test of joint significance.

Table 7: Correlation Matrix

Item	Constant	Expiry date	Price	Hygienic condition
Constant	1.000	-.711	-.304	-.580
Expiry date	-.711	1.000	.001	-.107
Price	-.304	.001	1.000	.111
Hygienic condition	-.580	-.107	.111	1.000

Table 7 present the correlation between the variables. It was seen that all the variable negatively correlates with quality and safety of food. Results indicates that as price of food reduces, quality and safety of that particular food falls. Simialarly, as the hygienic condition of food serving environment deteriorates, the quality and the safety also reduces.

It was seen from the regression results that on the average females percieve quality to be related with price of the commodity, expiry dates and hygienic are issues of the males. This results brings to the fore that most respondent were aware of other pertinent issues of health and consider them ahead before price. It is also clear that some foods may not have expiry date on them especially food sold on the street. This would make it difficult for consumer to consider expiry dates. This confirms the study of Lewis (1999) that the ability to determine the quality of a product is limited since the microbiological quality is not visibly obvious in the first stages of deterioration. Therefore consumers consider a number of factors before making food purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that all the attributes of safe foods were significantly associated with educational level except price of the food. This indicates that the educated people do not normally judge the safety of a food by it price.

A number of attributes were mentioned as factors respondents consider before purchasing any food. Some of which include taste, expiry date, price, aroma appearance, food temperature, cleanliness of food serving area and texture. Attributes such as expiry date, appearance and food temperature were not significantly associated with level of education. Though expiry date was not significant almost all

the respondents agreed that it very important thing they look out for before purchasing the food.

Recommendations

1. Regulators of food vending ought to intensify and strengthen education on food safety and quality so that people appreciate the need for healthy eating.
2. Consumers are advised not to just buy any food from any joint but rather buy from places where clear food safety practices are respected or adhered to.

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