

FAST FOOD IN IBADAN: AN EMERGING CONSUMPTION PATTERN

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An unmistakable new pattern of food consumption is emerging in Nigeria. The country is witnessing an upsurge in the number of fast food restaurants. At present, there are well over 70 different brand names. They are so conspicuous that it would be difficult to miss their 'colourful edifices and billboards' (NigerianBusinessInfo.com 2000–1).

Fast food is a longstanding and well-established mode of consumption in Nigeria, and a particularly distinctive feature of the Yoruba culture. There are indigenous/traditional ranges of fast food such as *akara* (fried bean cakes), *ẹkọ gbìgbona* (hot maize gruel), *ẹkọ jìjẹ* (solid maize loaves), *isù sise ati sisun* (boiled and roasted yam) and *dodo* (fried plantain), as well as 'foreign' fast food such as hot dogs and hamburgers. The indigenous fast foods are sold by itinerant sellers from trays or boxes on their heads, from stalls in the markets, or by the wayside in small rural towns as well as larger urban centres. The outdoor eating habit is therefore not new or strange to western Nigerians. This is likely to have affected their attitude to 'foreign' fast food, which could be incorporated readily into existing patterns of consumption. But the 'foreign' fast food (what we mean by 'fast food' in this article), at present consumed mainly in restaurants in urban centres, also capitalized on the modernizing processes of the country, and came to represent class, status and wealth structures.

Hotels and restaurants have consistently increased their contribution to the country's economic productivity. In the space of four years, their growth rate almost tripled, from 4.50 in 2001 to 13.00 in 2005 (NBS 2006). The number of restaurants is expected to double in five years, an increase which Eke (2006), in his report to the United States Department of Commerce, has described as 'geometric'. The emergence and spread of fast food restaurants are part of the social transformation associated with modernization, Westernization, industrialization and urbanization, which bring with them an increasing tendency towards speed and superficiality in social relations. But though fast food is becoming increasingly prominent in Nigeria, not much is known of the local cultural meanings attributed to the phenomenon. These are significant, given its socio-cultural and health

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implications for the population, when social and health services are in a precarious state. An investigation of this sort is therefore needed to comprehend the dynamics of fast food's ascendancy.

The objectives of this article are basically three: exploring the interaction of local and global elements in Nigerian fast food; studying the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of consumers of fast food in metropolitan Ibadan; and appraising the general disposition of people to fast food consumption in Ibadan. A number of fundamental questions arise from these objectives, which will be discussed in this article.

AN OVERVIEW OF FAST FOOD IN NIGERIA

Fast food is a formalized means of consumption that is usually strategically located to suit the purpose(s) of market operators and those of their target customers. Fast food restaurants in Nigeria are modelled after McDonald's, and their colourful edifices and rapid spread make them very easy to identify in the major cities of the country. The origin of fast food in Nigeria is traceable to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a small number of chains were established, among them Kingsway Snacks, Leventis Snacks, De Facto and Kas Chicken (Nigerian BusinessInfo.com2000–1). Today, however, the list of brand names in the industry is being extended, so far without an end in sight as high sales volumes encourage new entrants to spring up incessantly.

The biggest of these chains is Mr. Bigg's. Established in 1986, it became a separate business from UAC Nigeria Plc on 1 January 2002 after demonstrating its size and viability. It now has about 200 restaurants within and outside the country, including its franchised locations, where the company gives formal permission to qualified individuals and companies to operate fast food businesses with its brand name. 'It is currently being positioned to rank among other top quick service restaurants like the McDonald's and Burger Kings of this world' (Nwuke 2001). Following Mr. Bigg's in terms of size is Tantalizers with over 30 outlets. Other popular names in the industry include Sweet Sensation, Tasty Fried Chicken, Big Treat, Kas Kitchen, Friends, Chiquita, Tetrizzini, Domino Dina, Trendy's and, more recently, Finicky. Most of the major fast food restaurants in the country have their headquarters in Lagos. Mr. Bigg's and Tantalizers, for example, have their headquarters at Ikeja and Festac Town, Lagos State, respectively.

The design of fast food restaurants in the country is such that people are expected to either eat in the restaurants within a relatively short period of time or 'take away', as an extended stay may not be tolerated. In fact, a leading fast food brand does not allow reading, waiting or loitering, and defaulters are warned that they will be handed over to the police. The main menu of the fast food restaurants includes meat pies, fish pies, doughnuts, hot dogs, chicken of all sorts, fried rice, jollof rice, fish rolls, salads, pizza and soft drinks, amongst other foreign delicacies. A new trend of late is the introduction of local dishes

to the menu to cater for those consumers who may wish to have a taste of their traditional cuisines. This was first introduced by Sweet Sensation to be adopted, later and on a large scale, by Tantalizers and others. A similar trend is specialization in the production and sale of some products in which the fast food restaurants are believed to have comparative advantage. Examples of this are Creamy Inn, an ice-cream-only restaurant chain; Pizza, a pizza-only restaurant chain; and Village Kitchen and Sammy's Food, which offer traditional foods only. Another recent phenomenon in the industry is the incursion of internationally established brand names into the country. Prominent amongst them are Nandos, Steers, Chicken Licken, and St. Elmos. The entrance of international brands with the continuous emergence of local ones has introduced a high level of competition among the brands, as one entrant capitalizes on the weaknesses of others. The level of competition in the fast food industry is only rivalled by that in the telecommunications and banking industries, as fast food restaurants surface in every environment considered viable to capture the market ahead of others. It is also common in the country to see fast food restaurants concentrated in a particular location, especially in industrial and commercial areas. According to *Food Digest* (2001), the competition is becoming keener even as the fast food industry is witnessing a boom. It is to cope with this competition that product and service innovations, advertisements and sales promotions have become major tools. For example, some, like Tantalizers, engage in outdoor catering services for social occasions, while others offer a telephone delivery service, such as Mr. Bigg's 'Dial-a-delivery: great choice in motion' and Tantalizers' Meal Express and Meals-on-Wheels, to cater for busy individuals who may not be able to go out for meals.

Once a fast food restaurant opens, aggressive advertisement and mouth-watering promotions are rolled out to attract customers into their outlets. Offers like 'free meals for the first 50 customers'; 'buy a particular amount of products and get a raffle ticket' or 'buy to get instant prizes' are common practices. Festive seasons are also opportunities for promotions and advertisements of fast food in the country. St Valentine's Day (14 February) is a good one, as lovers are wooed with dazzling promotions like On the Run's 2006 'Valentine Blast' when lovers got 'serenaded' with a free request card to send love greetings to loved ones on national radio, the right to choose songs in the outlet and sing along, free ice cream for all ladies, roses for the first twenty couples, branded love jotters, love cards and Valentine story cards (*The Punch*, 9 February 2006). A similar promotion was Tantalizers' 'bite and win bonanza' when the fast food outfit partnered multinational companies to 'reward' faithful customers with a Kia Rio car, home theatre electronics and other consolation prizes (*The Punch*, 9 December 2005).

URBANIZATION, FAST FOOD AND HEALTH IN NIGERIA

Fast food consumption is, without doubt, an urban phenomenon in Nigeria. Although more than 60 per cent of Nigerians are still

rural dwellers (FGN 2004; Ekong 2003), the rate of urbanization and urbanism is increasing at an alarming rate (Kennedy 2003; Ruel, Haddad and Garrett 1999; Gbadegesin 1994; Pearce, Kujore and Agboh-Bankole 1988). The current urban growth rate is 3.7 per cent annually (FGN 2004), meaning that the population of urban dwellers is likely to double in about 17 years, seemingly in keeping with the projection that, from 2007, the number of urban inhabitants will surpass rural dwellers as a percentage of the total world population (UNU-WIDER Project Workshop 2007).

In the urban centres, life is fast as home and work are disaggregated and people are compelled to sacrifice some traditional activities usually shared, one of which is eating together at home. Women have long been active in the informal sector in western Nigeria, but more recently and increasingly women have been entering the formal sector, in response to both modernization and the untoward consequences of the country's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Although the proportion of women in the formal sector may not be as high as that of their male counterparts, the 'unbreakable Plexiglas ceilings' are undoubtedly gradually being breached as more women now enter even the hitherto male-dominated professions. As a result, women now average less than four hours per day for child care and other related family indoors activities (Olayiwola, Soyibo and Atinmo 2004: 9). As the youth and the family are in transition in Nigeria, the ability of the family to perform its traditional roles of character moulding and modelling are certain to be undermined (Olutayo and Omobowale 2006; Balogun and Olutayo 2005–6; Thornton and Fricke 1987).

Urbanization and rurality have been variously linked with differentials in food consumption in the literature and their implications also documented (Mendez, Shufa Du and Popkin 2004; Chopra 2004; Kinabo 2004; Bloem, Moench-Pfanner, Gracian, Stallkamp and de Pee 2004; Olayiwola, Soyibo and Atinmo 2004; Schultz 2004; Kennedy 2003; Ruel, Haddad and Garrett 1999; Opare-Obisaw 1998; Iyun 1992; Pearce, Kujore and Agboh-Bankole 1988). 'Foreign' fast food is a predominantly urban phenomenon, whereas traditional fast food crosses the rural–urban divide. While traditional fast food is mainly prepared with indigenous ingredients and to local taste, the 'foreign' model is more diversified, as the urban populations embrace consumption patterns broadly similar to Western ones under the spurs of availability, accessibility and the quest to fit into an emerging trend (Ajewole and Omonona 2006; FGN 2006; Olarinde and Kuponiyi 2005; International Institute of Tropical Agriculture 2004; Adeyemo 2002).¹ These foods have high proportions of oil, salt, fat and sugar, and are therefore higher in calories than other foods (Kinabo 2004).

¹ Chopra (2004) finds similar patterns in South Africa. He maintains that while it has been found that nearly all rural dwellers consume local and natural foods, a significant proportion (about 73 per cent) of urban dwellers consume Western-type food such as coffee, carbonated beverages, sugar, and so on.

Although evidence linking fast food consumption to health in Nigeria is still sketchy, a peculiar health revolution may be under way. Today in Nigeria, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) that were hitherto considered foreign to, and non-existent in, the country are emerging and assuming worrying dimensions. These NCDs are basically nutrition-related problems and they include obesity, diabetes, hypertension, stroke, kidney failure and cardiovascular diseases, amongst others. Hypertension, for instance, was considered alien to Nigeria until recently. According to Ajuluchukwu (2007), hypertension has progressed from near obscurity at the turn of twentieth century to a prevalence rate of between 10 and 12 per cent among urban dwellers, with all the associated health complications that that implies. A recent hospital-based survey has similarly shown that almost 70 per cent of out-patients in hospital are now hypertensive (*Saturday Punch*, 16 September 2006).

The prevalence rate of kidney failure in the country has been estimated at 120 per million of the population, is responsible for about 25 per cent of hospital admissions, and is the fourth commonest cause of death in Nigeria (Sokunbi 2006, 2007). Talabi (2006) has also identified the new dietary pattern as a major factor in the increase of stroke in the country. Likewise, Adedokun (2005/6) has partly traced the high incidence of diabetes mellitus in the country to '[a] trend of urbanization and fast food'. He observed, through a national study, that there has been an increase in the prevalence rate from 2.2 per cent to 11 per cent, with most cases in the urban centres. While linking diabetes with the rising cases of kidney disease, Akinkugbe (2006) observed that chronic kidney diseases mostly affect children and youths below the age of 40. Nigeria's then Minister of Health, Professor Eytayo Lambo, concurred that there is a dangerous trend: he maintained that diabetes had increased from half a million cases in 1970 to over three million (*Nigerian Tribune*, 16 November 2006).

As a result, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) launched a crackdown on fast food restaurants and related activities to eradicate 'unwholesome practices and sale of sub-standard products'. These 'unwholesome practices' include an unhygienic business environment and the use of raw materials injurious to the health of consumers.

STUDY AREA

Ibadan is the area of study. The city is a cosmopolitan and populous one, the largest truly indigenous urban centre in Africa south of the Sahara, and strategically located as a point of convergence for all roads and rail traffic from Lagos State to the northern states through Abeokuta (Udoh 1994). Ibadan can be further sub-divided into Ibadan urban (Ibadan Metropolitan District) and Ibadan rural, the urban serving as the nerve centre of the region's cultural, administrative and commercial activities (Udoh 1994; Afolayan 1994).

The population of Ibadan was estimated to be 3,847,500 in 2007 (Research Machines 2008). Although Ibadan is traditionally known for trading, agriculture, craftsmanship and public/private enterprises generally (Afolayan 1994), since it became the headquarters of the Western Region in 1954 and, currently, capital of Oyo State, people have moved rapidly from the rural (Ibadan Oko) into the urban (Ibadan Ile) zone, which is experiencing rapid expansion to accommodate new political, educational, economic and social processes (Areola 1994; Afolayan 1994; Gbadegesin 1994). The new socio-economic processes include telecommunications, banking and fast foods. There is a conspicuous presence of telecommunication giants like MTN, Celtel and Starcomms in Ibadan, while the Central Bank of Nigeria's restructuring of the banking industry, which has increased the expected capital base and the required numbers of branches, is engendering an incursion of banks into the city.

Fast food restaurants now service this rapidly expanding city. At present, Mr. Bigg's has seven restaurants in the city while Tantalizers has five. Big Treat and other second-tier chains are not left out in this emerging strand of socio-economic development. The precipitating urbanization is expected to continue, and even increase, as the country as a whole is witnessing an unprecedented rate of urbanization (FGN 2004; ADB 2006; NBS 2006).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The data collection methods for this study were mainly participant observation, key informants, in-depth interviews (IDIs), informal interviews and secondary sources. In other words, a qualitative research strategy emphasizing verbal accounts (Bryman 2004) was found particularly useful. Participant observation, in-depth interviews and informal interviews enabled the researchers to get close to the data and study social interactions in their natural settings (Clarke 2001).

Participant observation was covert so that it did not interfere with the naturalness of the setting, which may have implications for the data gathered. Observations were made at different times of the day and different days of the week so as to identify variations that may exist across these periods. Public holidays and festive seasons were particularly targeted to capture the possible associated elements of fast food consumption in the study area. During observation, informal interviews were incorporated, when appropriate and possible, to elicit first-hand information and participants' points of view. Interviews were also conducted with four purposively selected key informants who had the capacity to give authentic information on the issue being researched. Three of these were managers of leading fast food restaurants in the metropolis. Although 'modern' fast food is gaining acceptance in Ibadan, there are *bukas* (traditional, indigenous fast food restaurants), which existed before the arrival of 'modern' fast food in Ibadan and which are still holding their own—some of them, indeed, being so

popular that they have assumed the status of landmarks in the city. Prominent among these are Mama Ope restaurant, Sade Eleja (a fish-and-drinks-only joint) and Ina Strait restaurant. In order to have a robust grasp of the issues at stake, an executive officer of one of these establishments was interviewed as a key informant. Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with frequent consumers of fast food in the metropolis.

Secondary data were gathered from journals, newspapers, documents, souvenirs from fast food restaurants, and so on. Data from participant observation, key informants, informal and in-depth interviews and secondary sources were transcribed, translated, sorted, analysed and reported using ethnographic summaries and content analysis.

THE SOCIO-GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF FAST FOOD

Fast food is certainly an urban phenomenon in Ibadan as all fast food outlets are located in the metropolis. Challenge, Iwo Road, Ring Road, Mokola roundabout, Bodija, Agbowo (opposite the University of Ibadan), Sango (Polytechnic Road) and Dugbe (Bank Road) are their major locations at the moment. The strategic nature of these carefully chosen locations cannot be over-emphasized. According to a senior officer at the headquarters of a leading fast food restaurant, 'All our restaurants are in choice locations, usually in the capital' (Interview, Lagos State, 27 April 2007). In contrast, 'You cannot get into the village' (Interview with manager, Ibadan, 16 April 2007).

When we probed for the reasons why fast foods are at the moment an urban phenomenon, the consensus was that affordability and population were the main factors. A key informant gave a comprehensive insight into the situation:

Two things. The purchasing power of urban people is higher. Then population. Those in Ikire [a small town in Osun State] are low compared to Ibadan. Even in urban, it is location issue. Why not fast food in Omi or Apata [suburbs of Ibadan]? The one in Apata has closed. Through-put [the frequency of the people or volume of people eating at fast foods restaurants] is always higher in a place densely populated—Challenge [one of the favoured locations for fast food outlets] is a transit to people from Lagos, North and so on. They alight there to pick one or two things before they continue their journey. The location and *awon wo lo wa niḃe* [the calibre of people residing or working in that neighbourhood] matter. For instance Bodija [a relatively middle/upper-class area] has people whose purchasing power is higher. (Manager, Ibadan, 25 April 2007)

NATURE OF PRODUCTS

Fast food restaurants in Ibadan serve both foreign and local cuisines. Tantalizers outlets in Ibadan serve foreign ('Continental') and local ('Africana') delicacies, and often have separate sections for them. Although Mr. Bigg's does not have an elaborate local cuisine section

like Tantalizers, it sells yam porridge (*asaro*), fried plantain and cooked beans (*dodo ati ewa sise*). Attempting to decide which cuisine enjoys more acceptance and sales—local or foreign food—we observed that the foreign sections—pies, fried rice, jollof rice, assorted chicken, doughnuts, hot dogs, soft drinks and so on—enjoy more patronage. Queues are usually observable at the ‘Pies and Fries’ section compared with the ‘Africana’ or ‘local’ section, which is sometimes deserted or scantily populated. Throughout our observation, we never witnessed queues at ‘Africana’, whereas the foreign section is usually busy, especially during lunch. This was corroborated by interviewees:

Foreign is more predominant; coconut rice, fried rice, etc. We have more sales there. People would tell you they would rather go to *buka* than to eat *amala* [meal made from yam flour] in Tantis [Tantalizers]. My sales are low in local. I sell more in foreign. (Manager, Ibadan, 16 April 2007)

According to another manager:

Foreign is more saleable since *aso* [a slang that recently crept into the Yoruba lexicon to refer to Westernized and educated people] want to eat what they could not easily prepare and eat at home. (Manager, Ibadan, 20 April 2007)

The same trend of responses was elicited from the in-depth interviews with consumers. ‘I cannot eat local dish at fast food with hands and I cannot use cutleries. I will rather buy ice cream’ (student, 17 April 2007). ‘People go there to eat the snacks more because the African dish is what they can get anywhere. Even they can go to *buka*. But pies, they do it better’ (female office worker, 15 April 2007). For another manager: ‘Me, *buka* pose a threat to my local cuisines because they sell hot *mama put* and *mama Chibuzor* compared to that which has to be put in microwave for you in fast food’ (manager, 16 April 2007).

COMPETITION

There is structural competition among fast food operators in Ibadan, since the major brands are often located close together in areas considered profitable for business. For instance, Tantalizers, Mr. Bigg’s, Big Treats, Foodco and others are located so close to each other at Bodija that only a few buildings and roads separate them. The same pattern is observable at Challenge and Ring Road, where Mr. Bigg’s and Tantalizers face each other across busy roads. One fast food restaurant manager explained his company’s strategy for keeping ahead:

There is competition. As a result, we do *blind sampling*. We go around eateries and buy fast food products and give assessment sheets to customers to sample colour, taste and aroma and grade to know where you belong in the market. We are concerned about customers as managers who lose customers are automatically sacked. (Manager, Ibadan, 25 April 2007)

According to a former senior employee of a leading fast food restaurant, 'If you squeeze in, you will squeeze out. You need to establish very well and get something good to people's taste' (former senior employee, 27 April 2007). *If you squeeze in, you will squeeze out*: the fast food business is acutely sensitive to competition involving established brands with some appreciable level of quality, standards and customer base, and there is no room for mediocrity. Would-be entrants must put everything right in terms of preparation before entering the industry.

When making presentations, you must list your competitors. '*Buka* are also my competitors. Mama Ope [one of the established indigenous restaurants] is a major competitor to me as she attracts the kind of customers I want to attract to my local cuisines' (manager, Ibadan, 16 April 2007). To find out more about the Mama Ope phenomenon in competition, we observed leading indigenous restaurants in the metropolis. Although they mainly sell local delicacies, they are also modernizing—clearly in order to keep up with the trend. The Mama Ope restaurant, for example, has been split into two: the original *buka* at Mokola market and a modern restaurant at Jembewon Road (a Government Reserved Area), where security personnel open doors to customers and carefully presented plates of food are served in an ambience well furnished with electronic gadgets and comparable in other ways to fast food restaurants. An executive officer of one of the leading indigenous restaurants commented:

It is the rich that eat here. Our foods here are standard compared to canteen (*buka*). Big, big men like commissioners are our customers. The poor cannot eat here because they cannot afford it. If they mistakenly enter, they will go out without buying anything or buy and never come back. (Executive officer, indigenous restaurant, 24 April 2007)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSUMERS

The people that eat fast foods fall into a range of socio-economic and demographic categories. However, a pattern is discernible. Our observation revealed the predominance of a youthful population. Across scheduled observation at different hours of day and seasons, consumers ranged from children to people in their forties. The elderly are the exception rather than the rule. Even when the elderly come, they are usually in the company of children or young people. It was a common occurrence to see no elderly people, or only one or two, among the population consuming fast food. This pattern was also observed by interviewees: 'Youths eat more at fast food if we take the average. It is the youth' (manager, Ibadan, 16 April 2007). And another manager emphatically concluded:

The youth. No controversy. Two things account for this pattern. I believe strongly, considering the age 15, 30, 40 when they are educated and looking for partners and have less responsibility and more money to throw around.

They are not conscious of health hazards yet whereas the elderly are more conscious of the health hazards because they are already diabetic, etc. Families do not come much except on weekends, particularly Sundays after church service. Singles, bachelors and spinsters and those dating come more. Families in most cases come on Sundays after church services to about 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. (Manager, Ibadan, 25 April 2007)

And according to an observer and customer:

Basically, the youth, teenagers, and kids generally. The kids are even more interested. They pester parents. They like sweet, sweet things. They know all the names of these eateries. They are extremely excited about them. Young lovers also go there to express affection. The environment is very comfortable. The air conditioners blowing, watching Channel 0 and so on. Young parents too. The old are not so much out for things like that. May be few people. Sometimes, the children drag grandparents there. Not on their own. They want something more mature, not Mr. Bigg's. (Office worker, 21 April 2007)

Another customer agreed: 'Mainly, the youth. The old are conservative' (banker, 24 April 2007).

Since fast food restaurants advertise through different media such as television, radio stations, billboards, souvenirs, and so on, a content analysis of these advertisements was revealing. The 2007 UACN plc calendar, in advertising some brands of fast food restaurants including Mr. Bigg's, clearly displayed their target population. The page for Mr. Bigg's has a splendid array of children savouring doughnuts, pies, chicken and salad in a 'take-away' pack, with the caption 'Where every kid is a "bigg man"'. This advertisement obviously targeted children. That for Creamy Inn advertised youths who are hanging out with friends to 'enjoy life!'. That of Chicken: Luv that Chicken displayed assorted foreign cuisine with elated young lovers at the beach, while Pizza had assorted pizzas on display with children and ladies joyously lining up their bites. Village Kitchen with 'meals in your mother tongue' has different local delicacies on display, with adult couples smiling while enjoying the treat. For Nandos, it is smartly dressed office workers in suits and shirts as well as funky youths.

Tantalizers outlets always display an advertisement that has become a household watchword on their jotters, billboards and television screens. It targets young lovers with the caption 'She's been tantalized lately'. In the electronic media, cartoons and fan clubs are the dominant programmes being sponsored by fast food, the most popular of these being 'Ktime' and 'Mr. Bigg's Fan Club', which is mainly for kids. This finding is consistent with the study by Olayiwola, Soyibo and Atinmo (2004) in which they discovered that the age of primary consumers of fast foods ranged from under 20 to 40, reflecting the lifestyle of this group.

We attempted to understand perceptions of the comparative cost of fast food and *buka* to observe affordability and the socio-economic backgrounds of their respective patrons. People agreed that fast food

is generally far more expensive than *buka*. Artisans do not frequent fast food outlets except on rare occasions, for example in the festive season. This finding is consistent with that of Akinyele (1998, 1991), who concluded that most of the 'Bukateria' food consumers are in lower socio-economic groups, while most major consumers of fast food are middle-income earners. An informant captures the trend vividly:

Fast food is more expensive than an average *buka*. The overhead will be built into whatever we sell. We pay all sorts of taxes. All services that go into it must be factored into it and it affects prices. Newspapers, bills, recharge cards for some staff. No DSTV, air conditioners and fumigation in *buka*. The poor, no. The average, yes, as the rich will rather go to hotels and they have caterers at home. The artisans, once in a while. It is a one-off visit. The office people come for lunch, hang around with girl friends and at closing time. Business people meet here to strike deals [pointing at some to demonstrate the authenticity of his information]. (Manager, Ibadan, 25 April 2007)

As a housewife observes, 'Fast food is more expensive than *buka*. Though a few *buka* like Mama Ope are expensive, very cheap *buka* are everywhere, which one can never find in fast food' (8 April 2007). And to a middle-class customer, 'Fast food is more expensive for you have to pay for the facilities. The air conditioner, the security that will salute you. You have to pay for all that' (female customer, in company of her fiancé, a microbiologist, 25 April 2007).

Why were people willing to pay these high prices for fast food? The responses suggested a combination of the pressures of fast urban life and a desire for elegance. As people work more outside the home, the tendency is for them to eat outside the home too, and 'modern' and 'befitting' restaurants appeal more to some once they can afford them and integrate them in their lifestyles. Fast food is seen as elegant, trendy and sophisticated in the context of our study. Fast food restaurants are maximizing the opportunity to experience them in this way: according to observation, some of them have photographers in the restaurants or nearby to attend to customers who desire to capture the moments they spend there. One interviewee put it like this:

Sincerely, it is a status thing. It is common to hear people say *je ki n gbe e lo si Tantis* ['let me take you out to Tantis']. During festivals, it is usually abundantly jam-packed. They [customers] snap pictures to show off. 'I patronized Tantis,' they would say, and flaunt pictures. (Manager, Ibadan, 25 April 2007)

For another respondent:

They [consumers] want a sense of belonging. Pride. People flaunt the crested nylon and receipt to show off that they were at fast food. The comfort, the meeting point and the facilities (the air conditioner, TV etc.) are enticing and people like to have a feel of the environment. (Postgraduate student, 24 April 2007)

Another said animatedly:

Let me tell you, basically, basically, basically, fast food is a class thing and as Africans we like to belong. We want to show off. You want to boost your self-esteem. Even when the money is not easily available, you do not want to be left behind. We like to associate with what is in vogue. *I better pass my neighbour* [a pidgin expression meaning *I am better than other people*].
(Married woman, office worker, 21 April 2007)

Another opined:

People feel cool. Personally I do. People feel cool especially as it is trendy. I have a friend that celebrates his birthday at Bigg's and he called me to come over and enjoy and he bragged about taking me to Bigg's. (Banker, Ibadan, 24 April 2007)

A consumer put the feeling this way: 'When I go around and see class people I am moved; I feel strongly to join them' (Ibadan, 25 April 2007). Another gesticulated eloquently when making the same point:

You should dress cool. Though they can not pursue you if you dress anyhow but for you to belong, you have to dress well so as not to feel intimidated. You want to show that *I dey, I dey* [that is, I belong to this class]. (22 April 2007)

According to a middle-class professional and industry watcher:

Besides the glamour, it is more of class symbol. The professionals patronize it more because of their tight schedule. There are other places they could go but it belittles them so they go to fast food. Also, for clients they keep. Bankers won't take their girlfriends to *buka* and cafeteria but to Tantis and Mr. Bigg's to create an impression that the guy is well boxed-up [financially capable] to take good care of you. (Lecturer, 15 November 2007)

It was often repeated in the responses that displaying the 'take away' packs of fast food restaurants is assuming a class dimension, as people consider these as marks of a privileged lifestyle. During observation, similarly, we noticed that customers were generally relaxed and savouring the ambience of the eateries. They dress trendily and sometimes gently sway to the modern and funky music oozing from the sound systems. As some sit in pairs with the opposite sex or wait for partners to arrive, they eat quietly in a generally organized atmosphere.

While some see fast food as a main meal, others see it as something to eat before they have their main meal. With the introduction of local cuisines to some of these fast food restaurants, some believe the local dishes are 'heavy' enough to be main menu, along with the rice and chicken, while the pies are mostly seen as occasional things to consume before they go for a normal meal. According to one manager, 'It depends on the individual. Some see it as *ipanu* [a snack to add to the main menu] and others as real menu, depending on what you eat. Fried rice for instance is not *ipanu*' (manager, Ibadan, 16 April 2007).

For another, 'Because of the new innovation people use it for a real meal' (Ibadan, 18 April 2007). As a consumer explained:

People use the main menu—rice, *amala*—as main course, while the snacks are not. You cannot eat the rice and chicken that is as expensive as that and say you still want to go for main menu. How much do you now want to spend for the main course? (Marketing executive, 17 April 2007)

As health issues associated with fast foods have been widely documented in the literature, we examined the health concerns of respondents in the context of our study. As far as one customer was concerned, fast food was 'Not a health issue in Nigeria. It is in America. Not at all. You know it is affordable there, but here it is expensive' (male student, 24 April 2007). Neither was health an issue for another respondent, 'At least not for now. People do not see it as having health implications for now. At least on the average. It is not yet every time eating thing' (office worker, 21 April 2007). We heard from a manager that 'Health is just on the pages of the papers. Like my friend in Skye Bank complains about fat but still eats his meat pie' (manager, Ibadan, 16 April 2007). One customer, at least, discovered the effects of excessive consumption through personal experience:

There are health matters, especially in the papers. They are silent killers. I used to be bigger when I was eating fast food every day. *Mi o carry e ri* [I never missed a day]. It was my popsy [father] that told me it was fast food that made me to be very big before I slowed down to regain my shape. (Marketing executive, 17 April 2007)

These responses to health questions revealed that on the whole people have not yet personalized the health consequences of this pattern of consumption. All those interviewed are consumers of fast food, but most perceive the health discourse as not being for them but for 'pages of newspapers', like politics. Most think there may only be health consequences if fast food is consumed every day, though 'excessive consumption' of fast food has been defined as two or three times per week (Wikipedia 2007).

Against this background, while it is customary to situate fast food discourse within the debate on the homogenizing/heterogenizing effects of globalization and Westernization (Ram 2004; Kellner 1999; Ritzer 1996, 1993), that is not the remit of this article. Our aim is to explore, on the ground, an experience that is punctuating the socio-cultural scapes of a people. In other words, rather than assuming that Westernization and globalization are solely responsible for the emerging pattern of fast food consumption in Ibadan, the focus is to explore the effects of adding a new range of cooked foods to the existing range (cf. Cooper 2001: 189; Fantasia 1995). As we have noted, the consumption of 'ready-to-eat' foods is not really new to Nigeria. The transition from the relatively simple consumption order of traditional ready-cooked foods to modern fast food has been variously linked to transformations of the colonial political and economic system,

large-scale importation of food as relief aid, and the integration of the country into the new world socio-economic system (Ikpe 1994; Okere 1983; Watts 1983). This context is important, but our aim is to interrogate fast food in Ibadan as a cultural industry and a social experience that can influence how people define themselves, others and relationships in the society (Fantasia 1995).

While most of the fast food restaurants in Nigeria are locally owned, their images, service delivery and creeds are known among the people to be non-indigenous, particularly in Ibadan where this study was conducted. Even when the people go to fast food restaurants to consume 'Africana', the context is significant, and this is captured by a consumer:

They are indigenously owned but their system of service provision tends towards what is borrowed from abroad. They are unlike the *buka*. They are seen to be of better standard because of the glamour that surrounds the services they provide, not because they serve better food – comfort of A/C, soft seats, satellite TV, all unlike the *buka*. The uniformed guards, unlike the *buka*. It gives a feeling of being in the West, even though you are not there. Though I have not been in US and UK, but with the services I can have a feel of what goes on there. (Lecturer, 15 November 2007)

Hence, although fast foods have been treated in this study as constituting a single category, there is further contextual embeddedness. As fast food has been discovered to be generally *fashionable*, there are instances where local food is considered more appropriate. A case in point is that there is a strong interconnectedness between customary functions and cuisine in Ibadan. Ceremonies like marriage engagement, house warming, and coronation, amongst others, are expected to be accompanied by local dishes like *amala* (meal made from cassava flour) with soup, the traditional cuisine of Ibadan indigenes, just as *iyam* (pounded yam) with soup is bound to be considered more prestigious among the Ijesa and Ekiti people than hamburgers or meat pies in such instances.

Thus, as fast food consumption is mostly consumed by the youth independently of the older generation, the socialization process and associated benefits that are usually inculcated through the nature of food and the context of food consumption may be disregarded. Notemans (2004), Whyte, Alber and Geissler (2004), Alber (2004), van der Geest (2004), Ingstad (2004), Whyte and Whyte (2004), van Ufford (2004) and Kellner (1999) have all demonstrated the strategic nature and usefulness of strong intergenerational kinship relations and existential overlapping of the 'two generations' for societal survival. Eating together enabled physical and psychological proximity, which promoted the socialization process through the invocation of kinship and social relations dynamics (Notemans 2004).

As Ibadan youth are internalizing the idea of consuming fast food independently of the elders, they risk losing social capital that could be inculcated in the context of eating, and are therefore open to

intergenerationally unmediated values that are conflictual. When such conflicts arise, it is common to hear the elders say, in frustration, '*omo taye bi laye n pon*', '*omo igba lode*', '*gbogbo nkan ti o sele ri*' ('the world has to cope with the children that it gives birth to', 'the children of nowadays', 'strange things are happening these days'). These comments show disapproval of the way social change has precipitated changes in young people's behavioural patterns, while the youth consider the elders to be 'old school' – people who have spent their time and should allow the young to chart their own course as it is now their time.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has discussed fast food as an emerging pattern of consumption in Ibadan metropolis. To enable a proper grasp of the phenomenon, we have placed it within a national context. Consumption of fast food was found to be booming and popular in the country in general, and in the context of study in particular. One fundamental point to note is that while fast food consumption is considered cheap and trashy in some advanced economies, and monumental legal battles are being instituted against it even as market share is being lost (Wikipedia 2007), fast food consumption is moderately expensive, and is considered elegant, in the context of study. At present, fast food is mainly consumed by the middle-income earners who eat regularly at the restaurants, while the low-income earners consume fast food mostly during festive seasons and on special occasions to enjoy the trend. What we have discovered, however, is a pattern and not a rigid categorization of fast food consumption in metropolitan Ibadan. The middle-income earners also patronize fast food restaurants during special occasions and festive seasons, thereby leading to an extraordinary boom at those times. On the other hand, the low-income earners may also consume fast food outside special occasions and festive seasons, but not as frequently as the middle-income earners, many of whom have formed a fast food habit.

Fast food restaurants advertise through the conventional avenues and their advertisements target mainly children, youth, the middle-aged and the middle class. As already found in Tanzania (Kinabo 2004), advertisements and sales promotions play a key role in expanding and stimulating demand among the younger generation. As the competition among the brands continues and increases, more aggressive advertisements and promotions are to be expected, while consumption is likely to continue booming as more people join the tide sweeping in favour of fast food consumption.

As demands for fast food increase, associated products like soft drinks are also reaping benefits from the boom. Coca-Cola and Pepsi have customized refrigerators in the restaurants for the display of their products for ready consumers. To better position itself for the market, the Nigerian Bottling Company plc (producers of Coca-Cola in the region) continued to invest in future expansion even as it

announced a turnover of N55 billion (US\$4.29 billion) in 2005, a 17 per cent increase over the N47 billion (US\$3.67 billion) it made the previous year (*The Punch*, 25 May 2006). Hence, there has been a persistent increase in the importation of food industry products from N56,921.4 million (US\$4,830 million) in 2001 to N113,133.6 million (US\$9,587.6 million) in 2005 (NBS 2006) while the overall upward trend in the consumer price index is being attributed, among other components, to food, non-alcoholic beverages, health and restaurant items (Central Bank of Nigeria 2006a, 2006b).

Currently, medical facts reveal that health conditions associated with fast food consumption are on the increase, while a significant proportion of the consumers are either oblivious of, or indifferent to, the implications of what they eat. The challenge therefore is how to mitigate or forestall the health crisis that may be under way in a society that does not have a viable health framework with the capacity to cope with the anticipated impact. As Nigeria is incorporated into the new world economic order, it is no doubt reaping some benefits from it, part of which is what the country is witnessing in the private sector. However, as is the case for most social change, there are bound to be dysfunctional consequences.

The country gains from the profits of fast food consumption, employment creation, appreciable returns on investment for entrepreneurs and revenues from taxes to governments at all levels. But the government, non-governmental organizations, social groups, individuals and international communities should prepare and intervene appropriately to address any untoward outcomes of fast food consumption. Enlightenment campaigns may be useful. One aim should be to encourage operators to inform the public of the nutritional composition and value of the products whenever they are advertised, so as to enable consumers to make informed choices when they are to eat fast food. Since the country's National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) does not cover all Nigerians at present, other agencies can partner governments, or work independently, to educate the people to prevent health consequences and/or help in dealing with diseases that may be a result of this pattern of consumption. Therefore, even as the country strives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and is receptive to modern initiatives, the elements of those initiatives must be well contextualized and their contours addressed in their entirety if objective development is to be achieved and sustained.

Fast food consumption in the context of study is a case of inverted value because it is a form of expressive behaviour which contradicts and presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms (Lev-Aladgem 1998; Babcock 1978). In the context of global socio-economics, the fact that it is from the 'West' may account for its transformation from junk food there to elegant dining in Nigeria – as almost anything from the 'advanced' society may be considered glamorous, especially when so represented in the media.

The role of the media as tangible infrastructure is crucial in the process of value inversion (Suarez-Villa, n.d.). It provides the platform

upon which the inversion depends by providing access and allowing groups, organizations and societies to develop relations and give meanings to actions. Because fast food is attractive, but expensive, anyone who can afford it thus acquires an enviable status. The elderly understand the finality and irreversibility of their condition as old and susceptible (Lev-Aladgem 1998: 141), and this may be connected with their attitude to fast food, which is largely disapproving, as demonstrated in their consumption pattern. What is going to happen when the current generation of youth becomes elderly? Has lasting damage been done to their health and to their socialization? Or are these fears exaggerated? Time will tell.

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ABSTRACT

In its modernization garb, development has come to mean the inculcation of foreign values resulting in the fundamental transformation of modernizing nations. Ironically, little attention is being drawn to the consequences of modernizing influences. This is the core of the article. Through qualitative research methodology consisting of in-depth interviews (IDIs), participant observation and informal interviews, the article examines the emergence and ascendancy of fast foods in Ibadan, Nigeria. Our finding is that the middle class, the youth and children, as conveyors of imported cultures (into which they have been socialized), are the major customers whose values are projected through marketing strategies by the fast food outfits. Unfortunately, the health implications of these foods have not been properly grasped by these consumers, and neither have the market operators attempted to sensitize them. The article concludes that even when modernization influences are to be incorporated in the globalizing world, their initiatives must be well contextualized, comprehended and their contours managed for objective development to be achieved and sustained.

RÉSUMÉ

Sous son apparence de modernisation, le développement désigne désormais l'inculcation de valeurs étrangères débouchant sur la transformation fondamentale de nations en voie de modernisation. Paradoxalement, les conséquences des influences modernisantes ont reçu peu d'attention. C'est de cela que traite cet article. Au moyen d'une méthodologie de recherche qualitative basée sur des entretiens approfondis, des observations participantes et des entretiens informels, l'article examine l'émergence et l'essor de la restauration rapide à Ibadan (Nigeria). Il constate que les classes moyennes, les jeunes et les enfants, en tant que véhicules de cultures importées (au sein desquelles ils ont été socialisés), sont les principaux clients dont les valeurs sont projetées au moyen de stratégies marketing par les enseignes de restauration rapide. Malheureusement, ces clients n'ont pas bien saisi les implications de ce type d'alimentation en matière de santé et les acteurs du marché n'ont fait aucun effort pour les y sensibiliser. L'article conclut qu'il convient, même lorsque les influences modernisantes sont à intégrer dans un monde globalisant, de bien contextualiser et saisir leurs initiatives et de gérer les contours de ces initiatives pour arriver à un développement objectif durable.