



## Likes and Dislikes of Local Foods Among Young International Volunteers in Ghana

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### Abstract

Food continues to be a necessity and a source of concern to all people especially travellers. The paper examines the likes and dislikes for the local foods consumed by young volunteers in Ghana. The data used for the analysis were collected from stratified sample of 320 young international volunteers, who volunteered in Ghana between August and December, 2014. The results revealed that attributes in the local foods such as the sensory properties, quality and safety, the novelty of the food, cost and convenience were favoured by some of the young volunteers while others like the nutritional adequacy, quality and safety, variety and service delivery and frequency of contracting foodborne illness were frowned on. Based on the findings, it was concluded that multiple factors influenced the young volunteers' likes and dislikes for the local foods they were exposed to in Ghana.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Food and its related issues have been largely ignored in the discourse of volunteer tourism even though volunteers, especially the younger ones, are often made to stay and eat from host families. Often, staying and eating from a host family at a destination is made obligatory and prepaid as the eating is perceived as an essential element in the experience of volunteer tourists at the destination level.

Despite the fact that the decision to expose these young and often inexperienced individuals to extreme and novel foods has negative effects on their health, emotions, and travel experiences, little attention has been paid to their food experiences. With specific reference to Ghana, studies on volunteer tourists have focused on volunteering motivations (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014a), volunteers' experiences (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014b) and accommodation preferences (Agyeiwaah, Akyeampong, Amenumey & Boakye, 2014).

Volunteer tourism is one of the forms of alternative tourism which aims at accruing more benefits to the host population, the environment, and the tourist. Hence, requesting volunteers to feed from host families or consume local foods can be said to fit into the alternative tourism paradigm. The term local food in this study refers to foods grown and processed within a particular locality with indigenous ingredients (Nummedial & Hall, 2006; Adongo, Anuga & Dayour, 2015). The consumption of "local" foods have been associated with a number values of the alternative tourism philosophy such as improving the environment, conserving "traditional rural landscapes", and supporting the local economy. Consequently, there is a "feel good-factor" associated with consuming them (Allen & Hinrichs, 2007; Enteleca Research & Consultancy, 2001)

Apart from these, local food consumption guarantees the food needs of young volunteers who may be out of the influence of their parents the first time. In addition, local foods serve as a conduit to experiencing new cultures and societies. It has been established that local foods constitute an essential component in the understanding of the culture of a society, and, also, forms an important medium for cultural expression (Fieldhouse, 1986). Hence, tourism dining has increasingly become a major conduit for tourists to appreciate the local culture of a destination (Kivela & Crotts, 2006).

This study attempts to address this deficiency by examining young volunteers' local food consumption experiences in Ghana. The specific objectives were to 1) identify the local foods commonly consumed by the young volunteers, 2) ascertain the likes and dislikes of the volunteers' about the local foods consumed in Ghana, and 3) explore the extent to which the likes and dislikes vary across the socio-demographic characteristics of the volunteers.

Regarding its relevance, the study about the likes and dislikes of local foods consumed by young international volunteers addresses one of the gaps that exist in the volunteering literature and operations in Ghana. Although Ghana is gradually emerging as one of the popular volunteering destination in Africa (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014), there is no detailed information on volunteers' food

preferences. This study makes a valuable contribution by highlighting on volunteers' local foods consumption and their likes and dislikes about such foods.

Young consumers are particularly an interesting demographic group for research because some previous studies have shown that they are more likely to accept novel products (Zychowicz-Jezewska, 2009). Naturally, young people have been found to tilt more to the neophilic end of the scale thereby exhibiting more tendencies to explore novelty and variety. They are also more amenable to change than their other counterparts on the age ladder.

Again, this study will help host families or local food operators to identify and address their short-comings. Mitchell, Hall and McIntosh (2000) suggest that consumer behaviour research is important for stakeholders in food tourism because it can help provide insight into who the consumer is and what motivates him/her to consume individual food products.

## **FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TOURISTS' FOOD CONSUMPTION**

In many food-consumption researches, socio-demographic factors have been recognised as important variables that explain the variations in food consumption patterns in different contexts (Cooke & Wardle, 2005; Lytle, Seifert, Greenstein, & MCGovern, 2000). Evidence suggests that age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, social status, culture and religion are significant in accounting for variations in tourists' food preferences. For instance, Tse and Crotts (2005) found that tourists' age distribution was negatively correlated with the number and range of their culinary explorations. This suggests that older tourists may consume a narrower range of foods available in a destination. Kim, Eves, and Scarles (2009) also identified gender, age, and education as three socio-demographic variables that affect tourists' local food consumption pattern. In particular, female interviewees were found to be more interested in and excited about tasting local foods when on holiday. Older interviewees and interviewees with higher education level were found to be more concerned about health and had a stronger desire to understand and experience foreign cultures through local food consumption.

Culture has long been recognised as a major determinant affecting general food consumption. Culture can be defined as a shared set of characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, and values that help groups of people to decide what to do and how to go about it (Goodenough, 1971). Accordingly, culture is a major determinant affecting the types of substances that a person considers appropriate to eat (Atkins & Bowler, 2001; Logue, 1991). It defines how food is coded into 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable', and 'good' or 'bad' within a particular social group (Mäkelä, 2000). Culture further determines which foods and food qualities are acceptable in terms of their sensory properties (Prescott et al., 2002).

Religion is another important socio-demographic variable that affects food choice and consumption (Khan, 1981). Religious beliefs have an impact on food consumption when certain foods are prohibited (e.g., Islam, Judaism), particular preparation methods are mandated (e.g., halal, kosher), or fasting or feasting practices are observed (Packard &

McWilliams, 1993). These practices and restrictions can result in stable and rigid food habits (Khan, 1981), and, thus, not just affect food consumption in tourists' home settings, but also in the context of tourism.

Many studies, including Sheldon and Fox (1988), Pizam and Sussmann (1995) and March (1997), have detected a significant influence of culture on tourists' food consumption. For example, Pizam and Sussmann (1995) observed that Japanese, French, and Italian tourists had the penchant of avoiding local foods in host destinations and always preferred to eat their own cuisines; whereas American tourists were perceived to have a slight preference for local foods in host destinations. Similarly, in a study on the role of food service in vacation choice, Sheldon and Fox (1988) found that Japanese tourists tend to be less willing to try new cuisines compared with U.S. and Canadian tourists when holidaying in Hawaii. Cohen and Avieli (2004) contend that Asians abroad tend to be less disposed than Westerners to partake of the food of "others", and are more dependent than the latter on establishments providing their own national cuisines.

However, using socio-demographic factors to explain variations in tourists' food consumption is not totally unproblematic. Khan (1981) points to the interrelationship between certain socio-demographic factors such as education, occupation, and age. As he contends, people with a higher education level might have a higher social-status occupation and can be older. Notwithstanding this shortcoming, socio-demographic factors provide important ways of understanding tourists' food consumption.

### **THE OMNIVORE'S PARADOX**

Given the focus of this study, which involves an investigation into the likes and dislikes about local foods among young volunteers, the research employed the omnivore's paradox as a guide. The theory refers to the process through which human beings and omnivores in general, relate to new or unfamiliar foods (Rozin, & Volhmecke, 1986; Fischler, 1988). The main thesis of this theory is that the survival of omnivores depends on an inclination to seek novelty and variety (neophilia), juxtaposed with a natural distrust of the unfamiliar (neophobia). In an evolving world, the durability of a species depends on its ability to adapt to the changes in its environment. At the same time, the omnivore creature must operate with caution as it samples new options, taking care not to introduce harmful or poisonous substances into its system.

Relating to the present study, though young volunteers are expected to try new and unfamiliar foods by eating from their host families, the omnivore's trait in them requires them to take care not to consume unsafe or poisonous foods that can lead to death or permanent disability.

From a sociological perspective, Fischler (1988) draws a distinction between 'neophobic' and 'neophilic' tendencies in taste, suggesting that humans have a natural tendency to dislike or suspect new and unfamiliar food (neophobic), yet have the inclination to search for novel foods (neophilic). According to him, the tension between neophobic and neophilic tendencies constantly occurs in the oscillation

between the two poles neophobia (prudence, fear of the unknown, resistance to change) and neophilia (the tendency to explore, the need to change, novelty and variety).

This theory provides important insights into understanding how young volunteers evaluate the safety hazards of unknown foods they have to consume from their host families. As such, this study aims to examine the likes and dislikes about local foods consumed by young volunteers' in Ghana.

### **GEOGRAPHY AND MAJOR FOODS IN GHANA**

Ghana is one of the West African countries that now encourages tourism as a route to economic development (Ministry of Tourism (2013). Ghana covers an area of 238,533 sq km, which is about the same size as Great Britain. The country is considered to be the most central in the world—a location that has implication for the country's climate condition (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare & Nsawah-Nuamah, 1999). Ghana is divided into four broad climatic zones based largely on rainfall patterns since temperatures are high and vary narrowly throughout the country. Generally, mean annual rainfall varies from over 200cm in the south-western corner to less than 100cm in the north-eastern corner which also inform the agricultural practices in the country (Dickson & Benneh, 2001).

The climate in the south supports a tropical rainforest, and, therefore, is the main area for the cultivation of food crops such as cassava, cocoyam, water yam, plantain, as well as oil sources like coconut and palm fruit. Aside the tubers and the oil products, the forest zone produces a lot of fruits (bananas, oranges, mangoes, pineapples, pawpaws, peas, coconuts) and vegetables (garden eggs, nkontomire, pepper, okra). These food products inform the local foods commonly available in the southern part of the country. On the other hand, the cereal-based foods and products such as maize, guinea corn, millet and the accompanying oil sources such as groundnut and shea-butter are produced and largely consumed in the savannah zone which stretches from the middle belt to the northern part of the country (Dickson & Benneh, 2001).

In most cases, these foods are produced by smallholder farmers using traditional farming equipments such as hoes and cutlasses and low input (organic) agricultural practices (Dickson & Benneh, 2001). The supply chain for many of these foods is characterized by being harvested at their prime or fresh state. Commonly, fresh fruits and vegetables can be purchased in small amounts at any of the local markets that operate in the mornings, on weekends and on Saturdays in most urban areas. Aside this, Ghana has thriving breweries which produce wines, beers and soft drinks which are familiar to many international tourists (Dickson & Benneh, 2001).

Like most countries, Ghana imports lots of food items and products particularly rice, poultry and dairy products to supplement its food needs. Cuisine in the urban hotels is international although supplemented by products from local cuisines. If one adds to these the fish resources from the sea and the other fresh water bodies such as the Volta Lake, one can identify foods that will, in principle, satisfy the needs and expectations of many international guests.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The target population for this study consisted of all young international volunteers aged between 15 and 30 who volunteered in Ghana between August and December, 2014. A gross sample of 320 individuals was selected by means of a stratified random strategy. This sample was drawn out of the volunteer registers maintained by thirty volunteer organizations who granted permission for their clients to take part in the study. Eighty percent of the volunteers from each of the organizations were randomly selected for the study. The use of eighty percent in the sampling process was due to scarcity of volunteers during the study period which happened to coincide with the outbreak of the Ebola virus in some parts of West Africa. For individuals who were not readily available, the questionnaires were given to their co-ordinators for distribution and subsequent collection. This approach helped to reach the respondents regardless of their locations in the country.

The questionnaire employed for the data collection had three parts: local food consumption, the likes and dislikes about local foods consumed and the socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents. The first part focused on the local foods consumed by the young international volunteers. In an open format, respondents were asked to state four of the local foods consumed during their stay in Ghana. This method provided the respondents with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge by writing the names of foods consumed. This approach was used due to the fact that self-reported frequency of food consumption is the preferred method of assessing dietary in-take in epidemiological studies (Thompson & Byers, 1994; Willet & Sampson, 1995). The second part covered the likes and dislikes that consumers associated with the local foods consumed. Similarly, in an open format, respondents were asked to state four each of the likes and dislikes associated with the local foods consumed. The part dealing with socio-demographic attributes of the volunteers sought data about country of origin (used as proxy for culture), age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, and religion.

Two separate analyses were conducted. First, data were analyzed to provide frequency counts of the types of local foods consumed and the likes and dislikes about the foods consumed. Second, the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was performed to test the null hypothesis of no association between the socio-demographic variables and the likes and dislikes about the foods consumed. All data were processed using SPSS, version 22.0 for windows.

**STUDY RESULTS**

**Profile of respondents**

A detailed description of the profile of the respondents was crucial for the interpretation and understanding of the likes and dislikes about local foods consumed in Ghana. A greater number of the young volunteers were single (95.0%), female (72.5%), in their late adolescents (68.1%), and had completed either high school (58.8%) or college (30.9%). Their places of origin were Europe (75%), North America (15.6%), Scandinavia (5.0%), Asia (3.1), and Oceania (1.3%). With respect to religious affiliation, over half of the volunteers described themselves as non-religious. This

finding reinforced the assertion made by Yeoman (2008) that religion is playing an increasingly less important role in people’s lives in the advanced world, especially the younger generation.

**Food consumption**

In order to ascertain the local foods consumed by the young international volunteers they were asked to state any four of the local foods consumed while in Ghana. Evidence from Table 1 indicated that fourteen (14) local foods were popular among the young volunteers.

**Table 1:** Common foods consumed by young volunteers in Ghana

Food types	Frequency	Percent (%)
Rice and stew	192	21.6
Fufu and soup (Pounded cassava and unripe plantain with mutton light soup, peanut soup or palm nut soup)	150	16.8
Red red (Fried ripe plantain with black eye beans stew)	140	15.8
Plantain (Boiled plantain and palava sauce)	126	14.2
Banku and okro stew (Corn dough and cassava dough paste with okro soup, fish or meat)	98	11.1
Yam (Boiled or fried yam and palava sauce)	82	9.3
Kenkey and fish or stew (Corn dough balls boiled in dried plantain leaves)	38	4.3
Cassava (Boiled cassava with palava sauce or fish)	12	1.4
Waakye (Boiled rice and black eye beans)	12	1.4
Gari and stew or fish (Fried cassava granules soaked with warm or cold water with stew or fish)	8	0.9
Koko (Corn dough or millet porridge)	4	0.5
Wassawassa	2	0.2
Tuwo (Rice paste balls with peanut soup or palm nut soup)	2	0.2
Others	20	2.3

The result identified rice and stew as the most consumed food (21.6%) among young volunteers. This was followed closely by fufu and soup (16.8%), red red (15%), boiled plantain (14.2%), banku (11.1%), boiled yam (9.3%), kenkey (4.3%), cassava (1.4%), waakye (1.4%), gari and beans (0.9%), koko (0.5%), wassawassa (0.2%), tuwo (0.2%) and others (2.3%).

The names of foods mentioned by the visitors were consistent with the common foods consumed on daily basis by most households in Ghana, particularly those found in the urban areas. Rice emerged as the most popular food among the respondents and that was expected, as rice has become the leading food in Ghana. Records indicate that the government of the Republic of Ghana spent \$374 million on rice importation to meet the growing demand (<http://graphic.com.gh/business/>).

**LIKES AND DISLIKES ABOUT LOCAL FOODS IN GHANA**

**Likes about local foods**

Guided by the neophobic tendencies inherent in human beings in general and young people in particular, the likes about the local foods consumed by young volunteers were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 2. The results revealed that five major attributes in the local foods were favoured by some of the young consumers. These were the sensory properties (57.4%), quality and safety of the food (16.9%), the novelty of the food (14.3%), economic value (8.0%) and its convenience (3.4%).

A total of 272 respondents indicated their liking for the sensory properties of the local foods consumed. Among the sensory attributes that attracted positive commendation were the taste (52.8%), the spiciness/peppery of the food (26.1%), the flavour (10.3%), the sweetness (5.8%), the texture (1.5%), and the appearance (0.7%).

With respect to the quality and safety of the local foods consumed, volunteers described them as healthy (27.5%), natural/ fresh (17.5%), of high energy (17.5%), nutritious (10.0%), well cooked fried (7.5%), and less processed (7.5%).

In terms of novelty, five specific positive features were mentioned. The foods consumed were considered as novel (58.8%), unique (14.7%), cultural in terms of their preparation and presentation (14.7%), exciting (8.8%) and colourful (3.0%). This finding is an indication that the uniqueness and the colourful nature of local foods could be used as a central theme in promoting Ghanaian cuisines.

From economic perspective, the local foods consumed by the international volunteers were evaluated as heavy and appropriate for work (50.6%), big portion being always assured (26.4%), and value for money (21.0%).

Finally, a number of the respondents found the consumption of local foods convenient. Specifically, they described local foods as widely available (62.5%) and occurring in variety or plenty to sample (37.5%).

**Table 2:** Likes and dislikes about local foods consumed by young volunteers

<u>Likes</u>			<u>Dislikes</u>		
Domain	Number	Percent (%)	Domain	Number	Percent (%)
<i>Sensory properties</i>	272	57.4	<i>Sensory properties</i>	144	35.7
Spicy/hot	72	26.1	Too spicy	96	66.6
Tasty/delicious	62	22.8	Starchy	22	15.3
Nice/ good	50	18.2	Peppery	12	8.3
New taste	32	11.8	Too plain	4	2.8
Nice	28	10.3	Poor texture	4	2.8
flavour	16	5.8	Salty	4	2.8
Sweet	6	2.2	Not very sweet	2	1.4
Yummy	4	1.5			
Fine texture	2	0.7			
Nice appearance					
<i>Quality and safety</i>	80	16.9	<i>Quality and safety</i>	94	23.3
Healthy food	22	27.5	Too much carbohydrate	38	40.5
Food being natural	14	17.5	Oily foods	34	36.2
Provides a lot of energy	14	17.5	Too much of frying	10	10.6
Nutritious	8	10.5	Unhygienic cooking area	6	6.4
Simple	6	7.5	Grit or stones in food	2	2.1
Well fried	6	7.5	Strange combination	2	2.1
<i>Exotic</i>	68	14.3	<i>Nutritional value</i>	56	13.9
Novel	40	58.8	Not much vegetables	24	42.9
Unique	10	14.7	Not much fruits	18	32.1
Cultural	10	14.7	Not much protein	8	14.3
Exciting	6	8.8	Unfamiliar meat	4	7.1
Colourful	2	3.0	No diary	2	3.6
<i>Economic</i>	38	8.0	Diversity/Variety	63	15
Heavy/filling	20	50.6	One-way	33	52.0
Dishing of large portion	10	26.4	Similar foods	15	24.0
Cheap	4	10.5	More rice meal	15	24.0
Satisfying	4	10.5			
<i>Convenient</i>	16	3.4	<i>Source of illnesses</i>	34	8.4
Widely available	10	62.5	Bad stomach	14	41.2
Plenty to sample	6	37.5	Very filling	12	35.3
			Too heavy for me	8	23.5
			<i>Poor/slow service</i>	12	3.0
			Slow service delivery	6	50.0
			Dishing of large portion	6	50.0

**Dislikes about local foods**

Based on the neophobic postulation that human beings in general are afraid of trying new foods, the dislikes about local foods offered to the young international volunteers were examined. Table 2 presents six food dislike domains identified by the respondents: sensory properties (35.8%), quality and safety (23.3%), nutritional value (13.8%), discomfort and sickness (8.5%), diversity of food (15.6%) and service delivery (3.0%).

In line with the omnivore's paradox, it was noted that some of the consumers disliked some sensory properties of the foods consumed. Among the commonly reported sensory-related dislikes were that some of the foods were too spicy (66.6%), peppery and hot (8.3%), starchy (5.3%), too plain (2.8%), salty (2.8%), poor texture (2.8%) and not sweet (1.4%). This implied that some of the local foods were not acceptable in their existing forms and would have to be improved in order to be acceptable to many people.

Apart from the sensory properties, some consumers expressed concerns about the quality and safety of the local foods consumed. This group revealed that some of the foods provided to them contained too much carbohydrate (40.5%), too much oil (36.2%), too many fried items (10.6%), are prepared under poor sanitary conditions (6.4%), contain a lot of stones (2.1%) and are made up of strange combinations (2.1%). The complaints about unusual meat and strange combinations are consistent with Sellerberg's (1991) notion of, "strategies of confidence". In his view, many people avoid certain foods they consider unusual because they associate these items with danger and illness.

As evident from Table 2, some of the consumers complained about the nutritional value of the foods supplied to them. This group of young people reported that their foods were deficient in most cases in vegetables (42.9%), fruits (32.1%), proteins (14.3%), dairy products (3.6%) and meats provided were unfamiliar (7.1%).

Another important area of dislike that emerged from the study was the discomfort and illnesses that accompanied the consumption of local foods. They associated local food consumption with stomach pains (41.2%), heaviness (23.5%) and inactiveness (35.3%) (Table 2).

Some of the consumers also expressed their displeasure about the monotony of the foods offered to them. They described the foods supplied to them as one-way (52.0%), similar (24.0%), more of rice meals (24.0%). This was expected as the range of foods consumed in an average Ghanaian household is limited, a feature common in most developing countries.

There were also dislikes about the food services. Traditionally, all patrons of food establishments demand pleasant service. Unfortunately, some of the young consumers encountered challenges with the food services rendered to them. They rated the food presentation as poor (50.0%) and the service as slow (50.0%). This is an indication that some of the host families do not pay attention to speed and courteous service which are expected of food operators.

**LIKES AND DISLIKES ABOUT LOCAL FOODS BY SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

**Likes about local foods by socio-demographics**

This section explores the influence of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics on their likes about local foods consumed in Ghana. It is an established fact that individuals' likes and dislikes of foods are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics (Axelson, 1986). Table 3 presents the chi-square results revealing the significant relationships between the frequency of young volunteers'

liking of local foods consumed and the young volunteers' socio-demographic characteristics. With the exception of religion and marital status, significant relationships were established for the other five variables examined.

The chi-square analysis identified a significant relationship between place of origin and the likes about the local foods consumed ( $\chi^2 = 31.845, p = 0.001$ ). From the results, over half of the young volunteers (Scandinavia: 72.7%, Europe: 57.4%, North America: 55.1% and Oceania: 50.0%) were satisfied with the sensory properties of the local foods consumed. The satisfaction was however much higher with those from Scandinavia. In addition to the sensory properties, volunteers from North America were found to be more positive about the quality and safety (16.3%) and the economic cost (10.2%) of the local foods consumed than their other counterparts whereas those from Oceania and Europe were more positive to the convenient (50.0%) and novelty (14.8%) aspects respectively.

**Table 3:** Likes about local foods consumed by socio-demographic characteristics

Individuals' Profile	Domains					$\chi^2$ (P-value)
	Number	Sensory Aspect	Quality/ Safety	Convenient	Economical	
		%	%	%	%	%
Place						
America	98	55.1	16.3	4.1	10.2	14.3
Europe	352	57.4	17.2	2.8	7.4	14.8
Asia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scandinavia	22	72.7	9.1	0.0	9.1	9.1
Oceania	4	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Sex						
Male	146	63.0	15.1	0.0	12.3	9.6
Female	330	55.2	17.6	4.8	6.1	16.4
Age						
15 -19	358	57.0	15.6	2.2	7.3	17.9
20 -24	54	59.3	18.5	3.7	14.8	3.7
25+	64	59.4	21.9	9.4	6.3	3.1
Marital Status						
Single	4566	57.5	16.2	3.5	7.9	14.9
Married	20	60	30.0	0.0	10.0	0.0
Education Level						
High School	284	59.2	16.2	1.4	7.0	16.2
College	135	58.5	14.8	3.0	10.4	13.3
University	33	51.5	24.2	12.1	6.1	6.1
Post Graduate	24	41.7	25.0	16.7	8.3	8.3
Religion						
Christian	210	59.0	13.3	3.8	8.6	15.2
Athiest	236	55.9	20.3	3.4	7.6	12.7
Hindu	4	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Jewish	26	53.8	15.4	0.0	7.7	23.1

In the same vein, a significant relationship was detected between sex and volunteers' liking for local foods consumed ( $\chi^2 = 16.778, p = 0.002$ ). On the whole, the males were noted to express more liking for the sensory properties (males: 63.0%, females: 55.2%) and the economic cost (males: 12.3%, females: 6.1%) than their female counterparts (Table 3). In contrast, the females were observed to be more

positive about the quality and safety (males: 15.1%, females: 17.6%), the convenience of eating local foods (males: 0.0%, females: 4.8%) and the novelty attached (males: 9.6%, females: 16.6%) than their male counterparts.

Similarly, a significant relationship was observed between age and volunteers' liking for local foods consumed ( $\chi^2 = 26.378, p = 0.000$ ). As evident from Table 3, slightly over half of the volunteers from all the age groups expressed liking for the sensory properties (middle adolescent: 57.0%, older adolescent: 59.4%, young adults: 59.4%). In contrast, the results showed that the value the young volunteers attached to the quality and safety (middle adolescent: 15.6%, older adolescent: 18.5%, young adults: 21.9%) and the convenient nature of the local foods consumed (middle adolescent: 2.2%, older adolescent: 3.7%, young adults: 9.4%) increased with age. This implied that efforts made by the host families to provide safe and readily available foods were more appreciated by the older ones than their younger counterparts. On the whole, the older adolescents were noted to be more appreciative of the economic cost of the food offered to them than their other counterparts.

Another significant relationship was noted between educational attainment and the liking about local foods consumed ( $\chi^2 = 31.700, p = 0.002$ ). The liking for the sensory properties of the local foods consumed was observed to decrease with educational attainment (high school: 59.2%, college: 58.5%, university: 51.5% and post graduate: 41.7%) while the value attached to the quality and safety (high school: 16.2%, university: 24.2% and post graduate: 25.0%) and the convenient nature of local foods (high school: 1.4%, college: 3.0%, university: 12.1% and post graduate: 16.7%) increased with higher education. Overall, individuals with college education were more positive about the economic value of the food consumed than the rest.

Although no significant relationship was identified between religious affiliation and the likes expressed in terms of the local foods consumed, it was observed that the Hindus were more positive about the sensory properties of the food consumed than their other counterparts. On the other hand, the Jews were found to attach greater value on the novelty aspects of the local foods consumed than the rest. It was also realised that the Atheists and the Christians were more appreciative of the quality and safety and the economic cost respectively.

**Dislikes about local foods by socio-demographics**

Table 4 presents the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) results of the dislikes about the local foods consumed by the socio-demographics characteristics of the respondents at 0.05 significant level. The results depicted that there were significant relationships between the dislikes about the local foods consumed and all the variables explored in the analysis.

A significant relationship was detected between the dislikes about the food consumed and respondents' place of origin ( $\chi^2 = 31.845, p = 0.001$ ). That is, the young volunteers from North America were less satisfied with the nutritional value (23.7%), the one-way nature of the food provided to them ((18.4%) and the discomfort and illnesses suffered (10.5%) due to the foods they consumed than their

other counterparts. Conversely, individuals from Europe were more negative about the sensory properties of the local foods consumed (38.1%) and the service delivery (3.3%) than their other counterparts. Overall, the young volunteers from Scandinavia were noted to be more concerned with the quality and safety of the foods consumed (Table 4).

Similarly, a significant relationship was observed between the dislikes about local foods and sex of the respondents ( $\chi^2 = 16.022, p = 0.002$ ). On the whole, the males were noted to be more negative about the sensory properties (males: 44.7%, females: 33.6%), the diversity of the foods offered (males: 18.4%, females: 15.0%), and the service delivery (males: 7.9%, females: 1.8%) than their female counterparts. In contrast, the females were observed to be less satisfied with issues related to the quality and safety of the food (males: 15.8%, females: 25.1%), nutritional value (males: 7.9%, females: 15.3%) and the discomfort and illnesses suffered (males: 5.3%, females: 9.2%) than their male counterparts.

**Table 4:** Dislikes about local foods by socio-demographic characteristics

Individuals' Profile	Dislike Domains							$\chi^2$
	Number	Sensory Aspect %	Quality/Safety %	Nutritional/value %	Discomfort and Sickness %	Diversity Food %	Service (P-Delivery) %	
<b>Place</b>								
America	76	28.9	15.8	23.7	10.5	18.4	2.6	23.711 (0.070)
Europe	299	38.1	24.1	10.7	8.0	15.7	3.3	
Asia	4	1.4	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Scandinavia	24	25.0	41.7	16.7	8.3	8.3	0.0	
<b>Sex</b>								
Male	76	44.7	15.8	7.9	5.3	18.4	7.9	16.022 (0.007)
Female	327	33.6	25.1	15.3	9.2	15.0	1.8	
<b>Age</b>								
15 -19	33.9	17.3	15.2	15.2	10.1	19.1	4.3	38.675 (0.000)
20 -24	48.5	33.3	9.1	9.1	0.0	9.1	0.0	
25+	30.0	40.0	13.3	13.3	10.0	6.7	0.0	
<b>Marial Status</b>								
Single	383	35.0	22.5	14.1	8.9	16.4	3.1	9.629 (0.037)
Married	20	50.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
<b>Education Level</b>								
High School	227	39.2	16.7	14.1	10.6	16.7	2.6	26.107 (0.037)
College	128	33.6	28.1	12.5	4.7	16.4	4.7	
University	17	35.3	41.2	11.8	11.8	0.0	0.0	
Post Graduate	31	19.4	41.9	19.4	6.5	12.9	0.0	
<b>Religion</b>								
Christian	170	37.6	23.5	9.4	11.8	14.1	3.5	53.456 (0.000)
Athiest	209	35.4	24.9	16.3	4.9	17.1	1.0	
Hindu	6	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	33.3	
Jewish	18	22.2	11.1	33.3	22.2	0.0	11.1	

In the same vein, a significant relationship was established between the dislikes about the local foods consumed and the ages of the respondents ( $\chi^2 = 38.675, P = 0.000$ ). Table 4 showed that the young volunteers' dislikes about the quality and safety of the local foods consumed increased with age (middle adolescents: 17.3%, old adolescent: 33.3%, young adult: 40.0%) whiles that of diversity (middle adolescents: 19.1%, old adolescent: 9.1%, young adult: 6.7%) and service delivery (middle adolescents:

4.3%, old adolescent: 0.0%, young adult: 0.0%) decreased with age. Overall, the young adolescents were found to be less satisfied with the sensory properties and quality and safety of the local foods consumed than the rest.

Like the other variables, a significant relationship was identified between the dislikes about the foods consumed and marital status ( $\chi^2 = 9.629$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ). The married were noted to be more negative about the sensory properties (married: 50.0%, single: 35%) and the quality and safety (married: 40.0%, single: 22.5%) of the foods consumed than their single counterparts. On the other hand, the singles were more concerned about the nutritional value (married: 10%, single: 14.1%), the discomfort and illnesses suffered (married: 0.0%, single: 8.9%), the diversity of the foods offered (married: 0.0%, single: 16.4%) and the service delivery (married: 0.0%, single: 3.1%) than their married counterparts.

Education was another important variable that was found to influence young volunteers dislikes about local foods consumed ( $\chi^2 = 26.107$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ). The dislikes about the quality and safety (high school: 16.7%, college: 28.1%, university: 41.2%, post graduate (41.9%) was found to increase with high education whereas that of sensory properties (high school: 39.2%, college: 33.6%, university: 35.3%, post graduate: (19.4%) declined with higher education. Overall, it emerged that individuals with post-graduate education were less satisfied with the nutritional value but less negative about the sensory properties of the foods consumed than their other counterparts (Table 4).

The chi-square analysis also established a significant relationship between young volunteers' dislikes about the local foods consumed and the respondents' religious affiliations ( $\chi^2 = 53.456$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). On the whole the Christians were noted to express more dislike about the sensory properties (Christian: 37.6%, Atheist: 35.4%, Hindu: 33.3%, Jew; 22.2%) and the quality and safety (Christian: 23.5%, Atheist: 24.9%, Hindu: 0.0%, Jew; 11.1%) of the foods consumed than their other counterparts. It also emerged from the results that the Jews were more concerned with the nutritional value (33.3%), the Hindus with the diversity of the foods offered (33.3%) and the service delivery (33.3%) than their other counterparts.

## **DISCUSSION**

The fourteen local foods found on the young volunteers' consumption list is an indication that international volunteers on holidays in Ghana were exposed to Ghanaian cuisines. These people were not only able to identify the local foods consumed, but were also able to write the names on the local foods thereby demonstrating knowledge about them. The names mentioned did not only coincide with the geography and climate of Ghana but also, coincided with the most popular foods consumed by the average Ghanaian family or households.

The study revealed that the local foods consumed by the young volunteers in Ghana evoked both positive and negative emotions at varying degrees- a feature that psychologists call, "core effect". That is, the quality of their food experiences take position on the liking-disliking or pleasure-displeasure dimension (Searle, 2000). This

observation supports the assertion that humans have the capacity to respond emotionally to objects, events and situations.

Among the common reasons the young consumers assigned for their liking of the local foods consumed were that they are tasty, sweet and delicious, natural, fresh, simple, colourful, novel and cheap. These praises conform to expectations as it had been noted that there is a "feel-good" factor associated with the consumption of local foods (Allen & Hinrichs, 2007). These are popular attributes that can be capitalized to package and market some of the local foods to international tourists.

The description of the local foods consumed as fresh and natural by the young volunteer tourists was in the right direction, and can be described as an objective appraisal of the foods consumed. This is based on the fact that food production in Ghana is still in the hands of small-scale farmers who use traditional farming equipment such as hoes and cutlasses and low input (organic) agricultural practices. Commonly, these crops are harvested at their prime for the market.

On the down side, the issues raised were mainly related to insanitary cooking areas, a lot stones in prepared foods and frequent foodborne illnesses encountered. Traditionally, Africa has been labelled as an unsafe continent in terms of food. The detection of a lot of stones in meals relates to how some of the items like maize, beans, millet, groundnut, dried pepper and fish are handled and preserved. Most of these items are dried on the bare floor accounting for the many stones when they are bagged for the market.

The observation that the value the young volunteers attached to the quality and safety as well as the convenient nature of local foods supplied increased with higher education may be attributed to the fact these people are still in the process of cognitive development. And because of that their food choices and preferences are closely associated with their knowledge about foods (Deng, 2011).

The establishment of significant relationships between the likes and dislikes of the local foods consumed and place of origin support the assertion that the acceptance of foods and drinks are, "socially constructed" (Seymour, 2004). As evident from the results, individuals from Scandinavia favoured the sensory properties, including taste, than their other counterparts while the young volunteers from Europe expressed more liking for the exotic nature of the local foods consumed.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this study was to investigate into the likes and dislikes about the local foods consumed by volunteers in Ghana. The data used for the analysis were collected from stratified sample of 320 young international volunteers, who volunteered in Ghana between August and December, 2014. Based on the main findings, four main conclusions were drawn. First, the range of foods provided to the young volunteers by the host families can be described as narrow. This is supported by the comments offered by some of the volunteers such as the foods offered to them were one-way or rice dominated. As evident in the omnivore's paradox,



human beings naturally like to explore a great variety of foods but with care not to endanger their lives.

Second, the young volunteers were not entirely satisfied with the local foods consumed in Ghana. Thus, there were mixed feelings about the foods offered to them by their host families. The likes range from the foods being tasty, sweet, natural, and fresh through to being novel, colourful and cheap. However, they disliked some of the local foods because they were too peppery, contained too much carbohydrate, were too oily and were deprived of protein and vegetables. Again, they disliked some local foods because they contain a lot of stones and caused discomfort and stomach pains. This supports the notion that objects, including food, can evoke positive and negative emotions in humans.

The mixed feelings exhibited by the young volunteers towards the local foods consumed in Ghana may be linked to three reasons namely- the physiological state, social expectation, and parental influence. The physiological view relates to the fact that individuals find specific aromas and/or tastes pleasant or unpleasant. It has been shown that individuals have different sensitivities to components in food and wine as acid or bitterness (Peynaud, 1987; Schutz & Pilgrim, 1957), so they may have different responses to aromatic compounds.

From the social expectation perspective, it is possible for some consumers, including the young volunteers, to use the consumption of local foods to mark themselves off from others (Charters, 2004). Thus, the young volunteers' likes and dislikes for local foods could be a means of differentiation (Bourdieu, 1986) consequently establishing their status by means of good taste.

Parental influence has been noted to shape people's eating behaviours. The family is considered as the primary social mechanism that determines a variety of individual eating practices, including assessment of satiety and attitude towards food (Deng, 2011). Issues related to modelling, restricting or controlling on food choices have been found to be significantly associated with food preferences. Stewart and Menning (2009) report that adolescents who lived in single parent households had less parental monitoring of food than those who lived with two biological homes or with adoptive parents.

Aside these, the mixed feelings expressed by the young volunteers with regard to the local foods consumed are also consistent with the omnivore paradox employed to guide the study. Even though the young volunteers were expected to try new and unfamiliar foods by eating from their host families, the omnivore trait in them required them to take care not to consume unsafe or poisonous foods that could lead to their deaths or permanent disabilities. Fischler (1988) indicates that humans have the natural tendency to dislike or to suspect new and unfamiliar foods (neophobic). Yet they also have the inclination to search for novel foods (neophilic). According to him, the tension between neophobic and neophilic tendencies constantly occurs in the oscillation between the two poles neophobia (prudence, fear of the unknown, resistance to change) and neophilia (the tendency to explore, the need to change, novelty and variety).

Thirdly, it can be said that cultural differences and sensitivities among the young volunteers and the host families underpin, to a large extent, the dislikes expressed by the young consumers in terms of the local foods consumed. Issues related to supply of unfamiliar meat, strange combinations, peppery foods, oily foods, and dishing of large portions all border on cultural differences and cultural shock. Commonly, what is defined as food or accepted as edible vary from culture to culture. For instance, in the Akan tradition, a good meal is one which is of substantial quantity, is made up of carbohydrates and is oily (eg. fufu with thick palm or groundnut soup) while in the advanced societies, emphasize is placed on small portions and a lot of vegetables and proteins.

Finally, the study makes a significant contribution by highlighting young volunteers' responses to mandatory eating from host families at tourism destinations which has implications for their health, enjoyment and travel experiences. As evident from the study, a number of barriers-including insanitary cooking areas, monotony of foods supplied, and slow service- would have to be resolved to make the local foods attractive and acceptable to a greater number of international tourists.

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