

1     **EVALUATION OF INDIGENOUS CUISINE IN HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS IN**  
2                                    **ABA, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA**

3  
4                                    ***ABSTRACT***

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

15        Keywords: Strong Brand, Indigenous, Cuisine, Globalization, Hotels, Aba, Tourism

16                                    **Introduction**

17        Tourism is a vehicle for economic growth; job creation but it is an under-developed  
18        opportunity in Nigeria (World Bank, 2011). Nigeria is a great country vastly endowed with  
19        natural resources that attract tourists from all over the world. It has as much cultural heritage  
20        that is treasurable characteristic features passed down from generation to generation through  
21        mindful conservation. These include: greetings, norms, appearance, custom, cuisines and  
22        traditions but globalization has eroded some of these heritages giving ways to acculturation  
23        (Ugbam and Chukwu, 2014). Challenges facing tourism industry development in Nigeria  
24        over time is our over dependence on western culture through globalization. The same is also  
25        affecting hotel's indigenous cuisine. A cuisine of a people is a style of cooking characterized  
26        by distinctive ingredients, techniques and dishes , usually associated with specific culture or  
27        geographic region. Nigerians are in dilemma of what culture they are, neither wholly  
28        indigenous nor totally foreign (Eze, 2014). According to (Udeani, 2001), Africans were told  
29        not to look back to their cultural values when they were colonized. Nigerians especially the  
30        Ibos are most influenced as the problem of globalization has affected their mindset  
31        (Agwaraonye, 2015). Nigerians love to live, eat and do things mostly in a colonial way rather  
32        than promoting indigenous culture. Cuisines are cultural norms that are used to identify a  
33        nation, region or state behind the product; for instance Pizza originated from Italy but widely  
34        eaten in USA and popular in major Nigeria fast food because it has a strong brand across the  
35        globe. Sushi is common in Japan, Kebab, fish and chips are popular in Europe, Australia and

36 New Zealand (Ayedunni and Olufowobi, 2016). Ibo food handlers can also come up with  
37 strong brand indigenous cuisines such as Isi Ewu, Ofoda Rice, OfeOnugbu, OfeUkazi,  
38 Jiiwai, Akidi, OfeOwerri, OfeAkwu, Ugba, Abacha, Okpa that other countries can  
39 popularize.

40 Nigeria has such a diversity of people and cultures that it is demanding to prize one national  
41 dish above the other. Each zone has its own regional favorite cuisines that depend on their  
42 custom, tradition, and religion. The cuisines play important roles in the structure of locations  
43 and tourism destinations. Climate, culture and history of a region form its food characteristics  
44 since food is considered as a subset of cultural tourism or heritage (Hamideh, *et al.*, 2015).

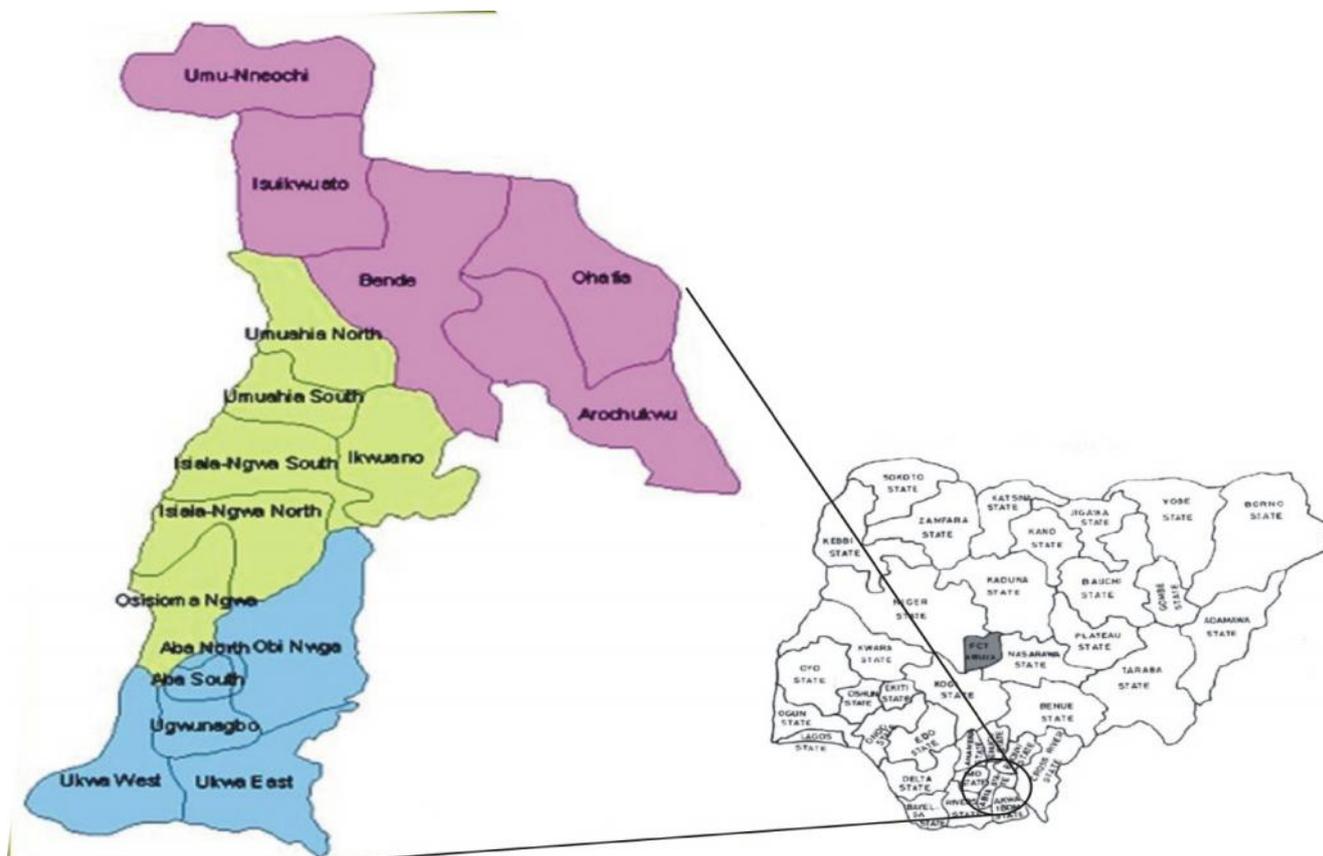
45 Ibo culture however are peculiar in terms of the types and forms in which cuisines are  
46 consumed. For instance fruits and vegetables proliferate in Ibo cuisines but are highly  
47 seasonal. However, vegetables such as bitter leaf, *amaranthus* (green), okazi(*gnetum spp.*)  
48 and pumpkin (ugu) are available all year-round, but are expensive during the dry season  
49 (Okeke *et al.*, 2008). Social and economic changes have influenced against the propagation  
50 and the use of these nutritious indigenous food plants in our hotels recently. Traditional food  
51 plants are accepted by rural communities as their customs and habits. Among the Ibos,  
52 different spices used in our local dishes are recognized by communities as having medicinal  
53 values. Studies have found out that bitter leaf apart from its use in cooking soups and other  
54 dishes can be chewed raw after washing to treat malaria and diabetes. Vegetable soup (Ugu)  
55 is used in the treatment of blood level (anemia). When cooked with water leaf can help in the  
56 treatment of malaria, dysentery and to boost appetite. Egusi is a spicy yellow soup made with  
57 meat, red chilies, ground dried shrimp, and greens. It is used as a major soup ingredient to  
58 produce a meat substitute in some areas. Egusi soup is highly valued in some Ibo  
59 communities and used during major functions and festivals. For this reason, there is a need  
60 for hotels and restaurant in Aba and Nigeria to serve mostly our native diet to attract tourist  
61 and to showcase our cultural heritage in cuisine, thus this study seek to identify major  
62 indigenous cuisine serve in hotels and restaurant in Aba.

### 63 **STUDY AREA**

64 This research was carried out in Aba. Aba is the main centre and the heartbeat of Abia State.  
65 It has two local governments: Aba North and Aba South. Aba is the giant of the South East,  
66 Nigeria and Japan of Africa. It lies at latitude 5°7'0``N, 7°22'0``E and longitude 5.177°N,  
67 7.367°E (WGS84). It has a population of 534,265 (NPC, 2006). Aba is at the intersection of

68 road leading to Port Harcourt, Owerri, Umuahia, Ikot-Ekpene and Ikot-Abasi. It lies within  
 69 the forest belt of Nigeria with temperature range between 20°C -36°C, the vegetation is  
 70 tropical rainforest, with a total rainfall between 2200mm – 1900mm. The soil fall within the  
 71 broad group of ferrallitic soil. The major crops grown include: cassava, maize, vegetable,  
 72 yam, palm oil. Aba has been the melting point of human activities since 1903, the city is  
 73 filled with business minded people, and all of the citizens are committed in what they do.

74 Today, traders come from all over the continent Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia, Togo,  
 75 Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and ivory Coast to buy made-in-Aba  
 76 goods for resale. The creativity of the artisan and tradesmen and their profound skill in  
 77 developing local content of all products became a story that transcended many shores. This  
 78 has in turn brought into Aba population of people especially the craftsmen and so many  
 79 industries to invest in Aba.



80  
 81 **Figure 1: Map of the Study Area**

82  
 83 **METHODOLOGY**

84 Interviews and questionnaire were used as a source of primary data collection, 200 copies of  
 85 questionnaire were distributed randomly to Twenty (20) different hotels in Aba to obtain their view on  
 86 the subject matter. Interviews were used to gather other relevant information mainly from the staff of  
 87 the hotels/restaurants visited. Descriptive statistics and percentage were used to the analysis. The  
 88 results are present in tables and pie chart.

89 **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

90 Two Hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed and One Hundred and Ninety Six (196) were  
 91 returned.

92 *Table 1. Gender Status of Respondents*

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male   | 118       | 60.20      |
| Female | 78        | 39.80      |

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

95 *Table 2. Qualification of Respondents*

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

96  
 97 The number of various respondents' qualifications was captured in the 196 returned  
 98 questionnaires. The respondents' qualification report showed the categorization of the  
 99 qualification according to WASCE, HND, B.Sc, M.Sc, Ph.D and Professional Certificate.

100 The number of WASCE holders were 34, HND 56, B.Sc 24, M.Sc 21, Ph.D 16 and  
 101 Professional Certificate 27. This provisional information indicates that HND holders were the  
 102 highest respondents, as the Ph.D holders were the least respondent.

103 *Table 3. Age Bracket of Respondents*

| Age (Years) | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| 25 – 35     | 50        | 25.51      |

|              |    |       |
|--------------|----|-------|
| 36 – 45      | 64 | 32.65 |
| 46 – 55      | 49 | 25    |
| 56 and above | 33 | 16.84 |

104

105 The ages of the respondents were considered and grouped in the following age interval: 25-  
 106 35, 36-45, 46-55, 56 and above. The results showed that the hotel customers between the ages  
 107 of 36 and 45 were 64 which is the highest number of respondents followed by customers  
 108 between the age of 25 and 35 were 50, customers between the ages of 46 and 55 were 49 and  
 109 customers between the ages of 46 and above were 33.

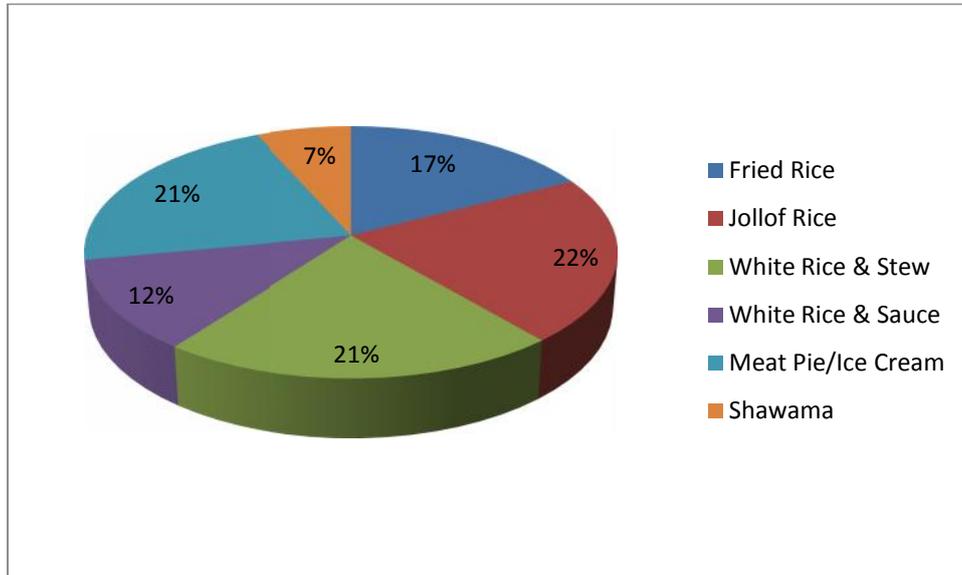
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111 *Table 4. Weekly Hotel visitation of Respondents*

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

112

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

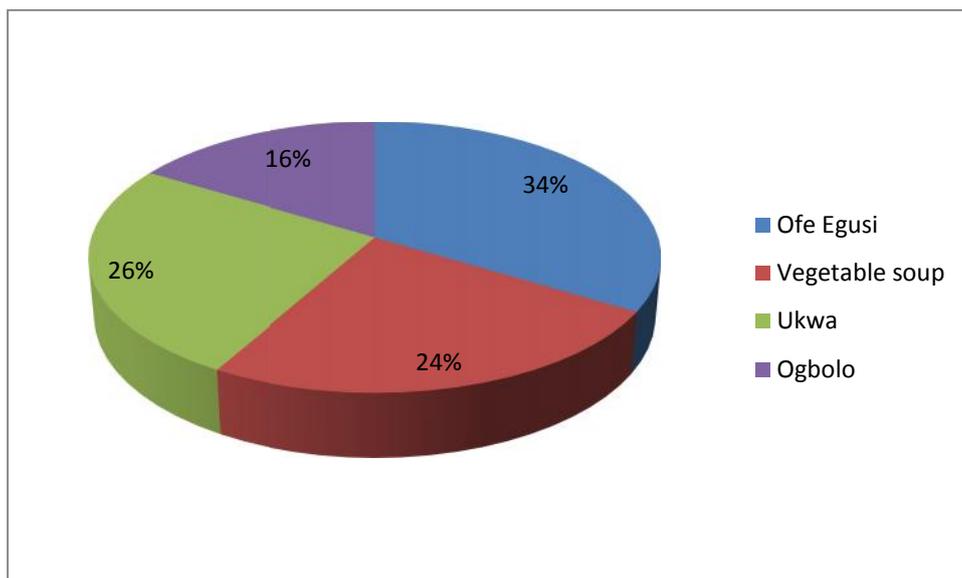


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118 **Figure 2:** Percentage score of Continental dishes mostly enjoyed in the hotels by  
 119 Respondents

120 Some continental dishes were found to be available in the hotel which was consumed by  
 121 customers. These dishes include fried rice, jollof rice, white rice and stew, white rice with  
 122 sauce, meat pie/ice cream and shawama. 42 customers consumed jollof rice, 42 consume  
 123 white rice and stew, and 42 consumed meat/ice cream each. Also 34 customers consumed  
 124 fried rice, 23 customers consumed white rice with sauce and 13 customers consumed  
 125 shawama. This shows that 126 customers out of 196 consumed jollof rice, white rice and  
 126 stew and meat pie/ice cream against 70 customers that consumed fried rice, white rice with  
 127 sauce and Shawama. Jollof rice, white rice with stew and pie/ice cream are mostly consumed.  
 128 Shawama was the least consumed continental dish in these hotels.

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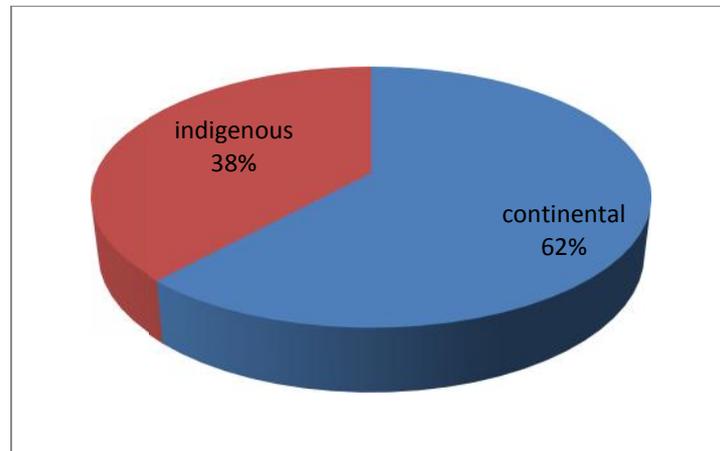
131 **Figure 3:** Percentage Score of Indigenous dishes mostly enjoyed in the hotels by Respondents

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*Source: Field Survey 2017*

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



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**Figure 4:** *Patronage of Indigenous and Continental dishes*

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Figure 4 above shows that 75 individual mainly patronize indigenous cuisines accounting  
 140 38% while 121 customers mainly patronize continental dishes representing 62%.

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## CONCLUSION

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In Aba, indigenous cuisines are supposed to be the most available dishes in our hotels but the  
 144 result of this investigation reveals that 62% of continental dishes are consumed in the hotels  
 145 while 38% of local/indigenous dishes are consumed in the hotels. Only Ofe Egusi, Vegetable  
 146 soup, Ukwa and Ogbolo Soups are most available in the hotels while fried rice, jollof rice,  
 147 white rice with stew, white rice with sauce, meat pie, ice cream, shawama etc are mostly  
 148 consumed in the hotels. 60.20% of men visit the hotel while 39.80% of female visit the hotel.

149

Thus, there is need to increase the consumption of indigenous cuisines in our restaurants  
 150 since these cuisines are excellent in terms of taste, freshness, easy to prepare and accessible.

151

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

155

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

- 156 1. The perception of Aba peoples should be re-oriented through conferences, workshops,  
157 publicity and advertisement about indigenous cuisines and their benefits.
- 158 2. The Hospitality Management Association has a duty to emphasize creativity and  
159 innovation to its members for proper branding.
- 160 3. The government should give the hoteliers the enabling business environment to operate by  
161 way of providing the necessary infrastructure and less taxation.
- 162 4. A brand cuisine in the hospitality industry has become expedient in Ibo land to create  
163 market for our indigenous industries.

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