

Effect of Social Media Tools on Service Delivery of Hospitality Businesses in Akure, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examines the extent and effect of social media tools on the service delivery of hospitality businesses in Akure, Nigeria. A total of 122 hospitality businesses were obtained from the records of the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and used as respondents for the study. Two sets of copies of structured questionnaires were administered randomly to 100 selected hospitality businesses. A manager and customer were randomly selected from each of the hospitality businesses as respondents. A total of 200 copies of questionnaires were administered. However, the analysis, which relied on the use of SPSS version 25, was based on 174 copies that were retrieved. The reliability test was determined using Cronbach's alpha and all the variables were above 0.7. The study adopted descriptive statistics to analyse the nature and extent of the different social media tools used in the industry while multiple linear regression techniques were used to analyse the result. Findings revealed that Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter were the most prominent social media tools used by the respondents. Results of the multiple regression analysis revealed an R^2 of 0.717 and a significant value of $P < 0.05$. The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between the use of social media tools and the service delivery of hospitality businesses in the study area, and therefore, recommended the utilisation of social media tools to increase their visibility on the digital space, for proper planning and maximum success.

Keywords: Hospitality business, service delivery, social media tools

I. INTRODUCTION

The increase in the number of hotels and restaurant businesses, in both developed and developing nations, over the last twenty years has led to increased competitiveness in the hospitality sector. The hospitality business is one of the most popular businesses carried out globally through the use of different social media platforms to reach their targeted customers, in order to promote the businesses and their products. Much of today's worldwide business is completed over digital networks that link people and businesses (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Similarly, social media platforms are also a way of managing the link between the sector and its customers. As noted by Kotler and Armstrong (2012), these platforms have transformed the development and practice of public relations of many businesses and public enterprises.

Okonkwo, Eyisi and Ololo (2015) defined social media as a form of electronic communication that facilitates free interaction among people all over the world. Similarly, social media involves getting and sharing data online through messages, pictures, audio, and video formats (Melián-

González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016).

Furthermore, the growth of social media is gradually influencing the life of people and businesses (Markos-Kujbus & Gati, 2012). For instance, Socialbakers (2012) reported that Facebook, the world's largest social networking platform, has over 800 million users worldwide, with more than 200 million users joining it in 2011. In addition, there are 100 million active users on the most popular microblogging platform, Twitter (who log in at any rate once every day). Simultaneously, Metekohy (2010) reported that over 24 hours of video were posted each minute on the video-sharing site YouTube and there were over 2 billion views a day on the website in 2010. To lend credence to this, Henrikson (2011) reported that between 2005 and 2010, there was a higher increase in the percentage of internet users across different age groups.

Social media platforms enable interactive communication, that is, information can flow back to the sender and again to the receiver as each participant adapts their message to meet the prerequisites of their audience. These interactions are usually conducted at high speed, low cost, and with great clarity (Ahmad, 2011). People drive this interaction at a speed that is convenient for them. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) hold that social media platforms are useful in overseeing consumer relationships with their unique ability to draw in consumers through in-depth, focused and member-generated content, engaging with different individuals through social interactions, and retaining customers through building relationships with other members. The authors have recommended that social media provides unmatched opportunities for hospitality businesses to consider and react to customer choices. Considering this increasingly interesting pattern and the potential advantages that social media can provide, most hospitality businesses have consolidated social media applications into their company websites to boost the experience of customers seeking knowledge in terms of business product delivery, promotion and communication. (Fuchs, Scholochov & Höpken, 2009; Sánchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluña, 2010). Chung and Buhalis (2008) noted that despite the increase in the use of social media by both hospitality business owners and their customers in developed countries in recent years, its uses have not been embraced most especially in the services sectors.

The available literature on social media focused on developed countries and links social media phenomena to other corporate

organisations. (Okonkwo *et al.*, 2015; Olukolajo, Ojo & Akinwamide, 2015). There have been a limited number of studies that investigate the use of social media on the service delivery of hospitality businesses in a developing country like Nigeria. This study explored the use of social media platforms in the service delivery of the hospitality sector in Akure, Nigeria, to bridge the gap.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Uses of social media platform

In many aspects, the use of social media sites has had a tremendous impact on businesses. It represents the evolution of the way users connect with each other, how and why (Parsons, 2011). In nature, social media is very collaborative, and users can easily exchange information on it with others. It helps in the creation of marketing communications opportunities as a media outlet. (Metekohy, 2010; Socialbakers, 2012).

According to Ahmad (2011), 'social media can be divided into three components. These are information diffusion, brand awareness and relationship building'. It is free and open to publishing for everyone. Thus, it is online, not confined to any physical set-up. The transmission of information is quicker and less inefficient compared to other means of transmitting the information. As a result of its powerful medium, it allows people to communicate in order to establish relationships between parties.

Similarly, in every organisation, the purpose of social media is to increase brand awareness of services, open successful consumer contact networks, track the credibility of the company (Melián- González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). Conversely, social media provides the brand with exposure and recognition to turn potential customers into existing customers and also generate thematic content that can contribute to an efficient marketing strategy. There is no question that its versatility, interactivity and ability to play several roles in almost every field of life have significantly increased the success of social media (Okonkwo *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover, unlike the traditional media, with their strict rules and time-consuming features, the social media platform is practically unrestricted, accessible to everyone, and superior in terms of high speed, cheaper to use in terms of knowledge sharing compared to traditional media. (Ahmad, 2011; Olukolajo *et al.*, 2015). The focus of social networking has moved from being consumption-based to being additionally open and collaborative, generating new age possibilities for organisational and consumer engagement. (Henderson & Bowley, 2010). Social media has become the pathfinder in the research range from many topics that include hospitality businesses. Because of the simplicity in its usage, wide coverage and speed. It has become the new and latest method of sell goods and services. (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), there is a need for marketing managers to have the records and control the nature

of the discussions between the organisations and the consumers using social media. Similarly, the time-saving and low-cost services by social media in any business facilitates various techniques of promoting goods and services, such as promoting public relations and communications between organisations and customers. It is also a center of attention in many hospitality industries. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tanuri, 2010; Olukolajo *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, Schneider (2009) noted that in a competitive business environment, the product or services need to be made available to customers. As such, marketing managers must ensure to keep existing customers and devise new ways to make their products and services get to potential customers. Similarly, Jothi, Neelamalar and Prasad (2011), as well as Markos-Kujbus and Gati (2012), observed that the use of Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter as tools allows users to regularly interact any business, and enhances brand communication in the business.

2.2 Social Media and Hospitality Sector.

For the hospitality sector, the utility of social media has many unique consequences for guests/customers, employees, and management. It is a rating system framework that can be used for tracking and evaluating the credibility and image of the company (Melián- González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). Marketing content created by online consumers is perceived to be highly impossible and in fact, more than the information attributed to the hospitality existence (Starkov & Mechoso, 2008). Hospitality businesses' engagement in social networking has proven to be an effective way of communicating and connecting with potential customers, yet minimizing cost (Okonkwo *et al.*, 2015).

It comes as no surprise that many hospitality businesses have taken advantage of the digital space. Furthermore, hospitality businesses engage proactively with their clients by offering creative, custom-made results and very responsive and timely customer service (Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010). Reviews from online consumers play a big part in the choice hospitality business consumers make today. The way knowledge is viewed today has changed considerably with an increase in the number of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram etc. that offer potential customers the chance to read feedbacks from other actual customers (Bobur, Obidjon, Pardaev, Sergio, Mukhammadkhon & Bakhodir, 2015; Okonkwo *et al.*, 2015).

If a user wishes to engage in an online network, shares a review recounting an encounter, or downloads content, those on the network are likely to be influenced by the opinion of the posts, a unique social network that enables users to build a profile and exchange thoughts, emotions, stories, images, etc. It may be a source of competitive advantage (Green, 2009). It allows people to upload content for others to respond and comment in diverse ways, for example, images, audio, or video, which forms the basis of websites (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009). Studies have shown that hotels

that engage their clients with contents via social media sites get their clients to spend more, and this helps build their clients base and also retain them and get more referrals from their guests.

2.3 Theoretical Review

The theoretical underpinning of this study is diffusion innovation theory by Rogers propounded in 1995. This theory is used for the study because it enables users to understand the dynamics that firms adopt when using social media platforms as means of marketing. This theory also explains the advantages of adopting certain innovations and the risks. It also enables firms to determine the best innovation that fits their businesses (Etemad & Wright, 2004).

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Everett Rogers presented the Diffusion of Innovation Theory in 1995. It focuses on understanding the dissemination of new ideas and innovations in a social environment, how, why, and at what pace. This theory takes a contrasting technique to the study of developments with regard to the theories of transition. Rather than relying on persuading people to adapt, change is seen as mostly concerned with the development or "reinvention" of products and practices to better suit the interests of individuals and communities. The diffusion of innovations is influenced by the innovations themselves, not by humans. (Robinson, 2009). Fichman (2000) defines diffusion as the process by which a technology spreads through a community of organisations. The theory of invention dissemination usually refers to the distribution of innovations within a society, either from one society to another or from one focus or organisation to other parts of the society. Innovation diffusion is based on four primary assumptions that can be split into four main components:

- a. **Innovations:** Any concept, activity, or entity that a person or other unit of adoption perceives as new. This encompasses all sets of new or old goods and services, but when it is used by the user. It becomes an invention when a person perceives it to be novel in terms of usage.
- b. **Communication System:** This is the channel in which users can share information. It is a tool for dealing with the circular flow of information between people. The more imagination spreads, the better and faster a communication system is.
The contact networks were categorized by Rogers into 'Mass Media' and 'Interpersonal outlets'. Although interpersonal networks are more important for the dissemination of new ideas or technologies, mass media may disseminate information more quickly. On the other hand, 'diffusion is a social process that involves interpersonal communication relationships' (Rogers, 2003).
- c. **Time:** With regard to the mechanism of diffusion of innovation, categorization of time records of adopters and adoption rate is essential. It tracks the time from the moment an invention is produced until it stops being one.

It measures the rate at which creativity spreads across society and is adopted by a variety of people.

- d. **Social System:** A community of interconnected units working together to solve challenges to reach a shared purpose (Rogers, 2003). An invention has little meaning unless it is accepted as such by a social structure. If society rejects an innovation, it ceases to exist. Conversely, when a social system recognizes an invention as such and then shares information about it within the system, it is disseminated with other systems.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study relied on primary data collected by a self-administered questionnaire. There were three parts to the questionnaire. Section A was used to gather information about the respondents' demographic characteristics, and Section B posed concerns about the respondents' social media tools and the extent of their use. Section C gathered information on the effect of the use of social media tools on the service delivery of hospitality businesses.

Two independent variables, namely, product distribution and promotion/communication were also identified in the literature (Carson & Sharma, 2001) as independent variables for the study. Five items were used to measure product distribution and four items for promotion/ communication. For the service delivery, two items, namely, increase sales of the products/ services and improved customer satisfaction were used. Data were collected by trained field assistants.

122 hospitality businesses were obtained from the records of the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Two sets of copies of questionnaires were randomly distributed to 100 hospitality businesses: one set of the questionnaires was administered to the managers; and the second set to one customer in each of the businesses. A total of 200 questionnaires were circulated, with 174 of them collected and examined. This equates to a response rate of 84 percent. The data were coded using SPSS version 25, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the research instrument's internal accuracy (reliability). Table 1 shows the results of the reliability test. The results show that all the values are greater than 0.7. Pallant (2011) recommends that values above 0.7 can be accepted for analysis. Hence, it can be concluded that the items reliably measured the defined variables. A multicollinearity test was used to test for the violations of assumptions for multiple regressions. The result showed no multi-collinearity problem between the independent variables because the tolerance values were more than 0.10 and the VIF values are less than 10 (see Table 5). Thus, multi-collinearity is not a problem for this study. To evaluate the degree of acceptance of the various social media used in the analysis, descriptive statistics were used, while multiple linear regression was used to test the influence of social media variables on the service delivery of hospitality businesses.

Table 1: Reliability test of the instruments

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Product distribution	5	0.977
Promotion/communication	4	0.806
Service delivery	2	0.886

Source: Field Survey, 2021

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The paper investigates the effect of social media tools on the service delivery of hospitality businesses in Akure, Nigeria. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 2. The finding indicated that 21(12.1%) of the respondents were within the age of 30- 40 years. 68 (39.1%) within the age 41-50 years while 85 (48.9%) were above 50 years. On the gender of the respondents, 112 (64.4%) were male and 62 (35.6%) were female. Regarding the academic qualification of the respondent, 30 (17.2%) had a secondary level of education, while 144(82.8%) had a tertiary level of education. The results indicated that the respondents were adults and had good educational backgrounds. Therefore, the data provided can be relied upon for the analysis.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the respondents

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Age of the respondents		
.31- 40 years	21	12.1
.41- 50 years	68	39.1

.Above 50 years	85	44.9
Total	174	100
Gender		
.Male	112	64.4
.Female	62	35.6
Total	174	100
Academic qualification		
Secondary level of education	30	17.2
Tertiary level of education	144	82.8
Total	174	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 displays the numerous social media platforms and their level of use in the hospitality industry among the respondents. Many of the respondents concluded that social media platforms would help hospitality companies provide better service. With a mean value of 4.66, Facebook was ranked first among the social media tools. The findings of this study are in line with those of Kotler and Armstrong (2012), Curtis (2013), Stelzner (2014), Olukolajo *et al.*, (2015) which found that Facebook has the most users of any social media platform. The result also showed that WhatsApp was ranked second with a mean value of 4.58, while Twitter with a mean value of 4.27 and Instagram with a mean value of 4.02 was ranked third and fourth, respectively. The least used social media tools among the respondents were Flickr with a mean value of 2.19 and ranked ninth.

Table 3: Nature and extent of use of social media tools for the hospitality business

Social media tools	Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometime (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)	Total	Mean	Rank
Facebook	3(1.7)	9(5.2)	0	20(11.5)	142(81.6)	174	4.66	1 st
Instagram	10(5.7)	11(8.6)	11(6.3)	64(36.8)	74(42.5)	174	4.02	4 th
YouTube	10(5.7)	7(4)	18(10.3)	82(47.1)	57(32.8)	174	3.97	5 th
Twitter	3(1.7)	7(4)	35(20.1)	24(13.8)	105(60.3)	174	4.27	3 rd
WhatsApp	3(1.7)	11(6.3)	0	31(17.8)	129(74.1)	174	4.58	2 nd
Skype	30(17.2)	17(9.8)	92(52.2)	18(10.3)	17(9.8)	174	2.86	6 th
Google+	30(17.2)	16(9.2)	93(53.4)	18(10.3)	17(9.8)	174	2.86	6 th
Blogger	59(33.9)	24(13.8)	69(39.7)	14(8)	8(4.6)	174	2.36	8 th
Snapchat	26(14.9)	43(24.7)	65(37.4)	26(14.9)	14(8)	174	2.76	7 th
Flickr	67(38.5)	41(23.6)	43(24.7)	12(6.9)	11(6.3)	174	2.19	9 th

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4: Use of the social media tool in the Hospitality business

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean	Rank
Product distribution	28(16.1)	79(45.4)	47(27)	6(3.4)	14(8)	174	3.58	3
Promotion and Proper arrangement	39(22.4)	96(55.2)	29(16.7)	10(5.7)	0	174	3.94	2
Advertisement of the products/services	96(55.2)	26(14.9)	42(24.1)	10(5.7)	0	174	4.20	1
Communication with the clients/customers	16(9.2)	64(36.8)	53(30.5)	27(15.5)	14(8)	174	3.24	5
Feedback from the clients/customers	25(14.4)	66(37.9)	42(24.1)	29(16.7)	12(6.9)	174	3.36	4
Monitoring reputation	16(9.2)	55(31.6)	77(44.3)	6(3.4)	20(11.5)	174	3.24	5

SA - Strongly Agree, A – Agree, U – Undecided, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree. The percentage is shown in parenthesis

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that social media tools were used for advertising products/services of the hospitality businesses as it was ranked first with a mean score of 4.20. The use of the tools for promotion and proper arrangement, product distribution, and feedback from the customers, with mean scores of 3.94, 3.58, and 3.36, were ranked second, third and fourth, respectively. Monitoring of reputation and communication with customers were both ranked fifth with a mean score of 3.24. The finding indicates that the majority of the hospitality businesses in the study area use social medial tools for the advertisement of their products/services, promotion and proper arrangement of their services, product distribution among others.

The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 5. The R^2 0.677, F- statistics 179.286, and $P < 0.05$ indicate that the independent variables only explained 68% of the change in the service delivery of the hospitality industries in the study area. Besides, the model met the fitness and robustness criteria for the analysis. The table also shows the multiple regression analysis results for the influence of the social media components (product distribution and promotion/communication) on the service delivery of the hospitality businesses. The results revealed that product distribution ($\beta = 0.873$, $t = 10.828$, $P < 0.05$) and promotion /communication ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 2.555$, $P = < 0.05$) both had positive and significant influences on the service delivery of hospitality businesses in the study area.

Table 5: Effect of social media tools on the service delivery of the hospitality industries

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-0.190	0.222	-1.853	0.395		
Product distribution	0.873***	0.081	10.828	0.000	459	2.180
Promotion / communication	0.206*	0.081	2.555	0.011	459	2.180

Model indices: $R = 0.823$, $R^2 = 677$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.673$, F-Statistic = 179.286, P-value = 0.000

* significant at 10% level

*** significant at 1% level

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The ability of the owners to take closer attention of the two significant variables and the dynamism in the business environment is a step forward in making and improving the service delivery of the hospitality businesses in the study area. The finding is in support of previous studies such as Kasavana, Nusair and Teodosic (2010) and Wang and Chen (2014). Kasavana, Nusair and Teodosic (2010) also found that for better business outcomes, businesses need to adopt the use of social media for product distribution, promotion, monitoring, analysis, and evaluation of customer reviews. Moreover, Wang and Chen (2014) observed that the majority of hospitality bookings in China are made over the internet

which leads to an improving in the service delivery. Social media tools are used almost exclusively to promote engagement with customers and this places the business at an advantage over other competitors (Leite & Azevedo, 2017). Internet advertising of products is a major contribution to brand competition in the market (Jothi, Neelamalar & Prasad, 2011; Markos-Kujbus & Gati, 2012). Similarly, social media advertising not only provides data about a product or service but also promotes innovation and facilitates consumer satisfaction.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has shown the impact of the use of social media tools in the study area on the service delivery of hospitality companies. The use of the social media plays an important role in the business environment of today's hospitality businesses. The study also showed that Facebook, followed by WhatsApp and Twitter, is the most frequently used tool in the hospitality business, while Flickr was ranked as the least used tool in the study. A positive and significant effect of the two independent variables on the dependent variable was also observed in the study.

Therefore, the study recommended that social media tools should be embraced for maximum service delivery with proper planning. Social media tools for product distribution, promotion/communication, monitoring, and evaluation of customer reviews need to be used on a continuous basis, which will allow hospitality businesses to reach a wider range of customers.

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