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ENHANCING SALES PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED RESTAURANTS IN NIGERIA USING UBER EATS STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of Uber Eats strategies on enhancing the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in Nigeria. A cross-sectional descriptive design was employed, with 257 respondents selected through basic random sampling from restaurant staff in the South-East and South-South regions. Data collection relied on questionnaires, while findings were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency tables and percentages) and inferential statistics (Linear Regression Analysis and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient). Results demonstrated a strong, positive, and significant relationship between the use of online food delivery platforms and restaurant sales performance. Additionally, Uber Eats' marketing strategies were found to significantly enhance the sales performance of restaurants in the targeted regions. The study recommends that small and medium-sized restaurants strengthen their digital presence and collaborate with online delivery platforms to improve visibility and sales. Furthermore, Uber Eats should implement localized marketing campaigns to better engage and support restaurants in these regions.

Keywords: Uber Eats, Marketing strategy, Sales performance, Restaurants, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, online food delivery platforms like Uber Eats have become crucial for small and medium-sized (SMSs) firms in the restaurant industry, particularly in South-East and South-South Nigeria (Jiang, 2023). Integrating Uber Eats into their marketing strategies enables these local businesses to boost sales performance, streamline operations, and expand their customer reach. By leveraging the platform's vast user network, restaurants can access a broader audience, even beyond their immediate locality, without requiring substantial upfront investments in marketing or infrastructure (McKinsey, 2023).

However, while the benefits of platforms like Uber Eats are evident, restaurants in the South-East and South-South regions face unique challenges that impact their ability to fully capitalize on these opportunities. These include infrastructure deficits, unreliable internet connectivity, and logistical hurdles such as inconsistent delivery networks in remote areas (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Addressing these region-specific issues is crucial to unlocking the full potential of digital platforms for businesses in these regions. For instance, restaurants often struggle with maintaining timely deliveries due to poor road networks and limited delivery personnel, which can negatively affect

customer satisfaction and repeat patronage (Okafor & Adeyemi, 2024).

Additionally, Uber Eats offers detailed analytics that provides valuable insights into customer preferences, sales trends, and operational efficiency, helping restaurant owners refine their offerings and optimize their marketing efforts (McKinsey, 2023). This data-driven approach allows SMSs to tailor their menus, enhance customer service, and develop targeted marketing campaigns to meet consumer demands more effectively. By addressing region-specific challenges—such as ensuring consistent internet access and enhancing delivery logistics—restaurants in the South-East and South-South regions can maximize the benefits of these analytics and other platform features.

The shift towards delivery-focused dining, especially post-pandemic, has further reinforced the importance of platforms like Uber Eats in meeting changing consumer habits in Nigeria (Ogunnaike, 2022). By offering the convenience of cashless transactions and real-time order tracking, Uber Eats enhances the overall customer experience, encouraging repeat business and fostering brand loyalty (Smith, 2021; Johnson & Lee, 2020). For SMEs in these regions, using Uber Eats not only supports growth and competitiveness but also provides an essential marketing tool for expanding their presence in an increasingly digital marketplace (Kumar et al., 2024).

To fully harness the potential of Uber Eats, it is imperative to address the systemic challenges faced by restaurants in the South-East and South-South. This includes investing in improved infrastructure, supporting training programs for delivery personnel, and ensuring reliable internet services (Adams et al., 2019; World Bank, 2020). By tackling these issues, restaurants can leverage the platform's scalable, cost-effective solutions to boost revenue, improve sales performance, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving foodservice environment (Chen, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

In South-East and South-South region of Nigeria, small and medium-sized restaurants face major problems in expanding their customer base and improving sales performance. Traditional marketing approaches and limited infrastructure often hinder growth. However, online food delivery platforms like Uber Eats offer a transformative opportunity for these businesses by extending their reach, boosting sales, and enhancing operational efficiency. These platforms allow SMSs to access a wider customer base, often beyond their immediate geographic area, with minimal investment in marketing or infrastructure. Despite the clear benefits, many Small and Medium Size Restaurants struggle to optimize the use of Uber Eats, particularly in leveraging data analytics, refining marketing strategies, and adapting offerings to consumer preferences. As a result, these businesses often face poor sales performance and miss out on potential growth. With consumer habits shifting increasingly toward online ordering, the failure to effectively utilize these tools have over the years lead to significant missed opportunities in a highly competitive digital environment.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to explore strategies for enhancing the sales performance of restaurants in Nigeria through the use of Uber Eats. The specific objectives were as follows:

i. To examine the extent to which the use of online food delivery platforms affects the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South regions of Nigeria.

ii. To determine if there is a significant relationship between Uber Eats marketing strategies and sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions were relevant to the study:

i. To what extent does the use of online food delivery platforms affect the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria?

ii. Is there a significant relationship between Uber Eats' marketing strategies and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H_{01}: The use of online food delivery platforms has no significant effect on the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between Uber Eats' marketing strategies and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The variables under investigation are reviewed conceptually, theoretically and empirically to harness the perceived gaps that the study aimed to fill. The concepts are discussed below.

Conceptual Review

Online Food Delivery Platforms

Online food delivery platforms such as Jumia Food, Bolt Food, and Uber Eats are transforming Nigeria's food service industry by introducing convenience and innovation. These platforms allow customers to order meals from local restaurants easily, ensuring quicker and more efficient access to food. The growth of these services in Nigeria is supported by increasing internet penetration and widespread smartphone adoption. Globally, the online food delivery market is projected to surpass $200 billion by 2024, with Nigerian cities actively contributing to this trend (Statista, 2024). Convenience and time-saving benefits are the primary drivers of these platforms' popularity. Customers can order meals at any time, avoiding the effort of cooking or dining out, a feature especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic when safe meal access became essential. However, challenges such as high delivery fees, service charges, and environmental issues – like packaging waste and increased traffic persist. Rising fuel prices further inflate delivery costs, affecting affordability. Technological advancements are mitigating these challenges. Features like contactless delivery and AI-driven route optimization are improving efficiency and enhancing customer experience. As the market evolves, these innovations are expected to make food delivery services more accessible, efficient, and sustainable (Chaffey, 2023).

Uber Eats

Uber Eats, a global leader in food delivery, employs a multifaceted strategy to maintain its competitive edge. A key element is its integration with Uber's ride-sharing platform, which provides a seamless service experience and extends the reach of the Uber Eats app. By leveraging Uber's extensive user base and brand recognition, Uber Eats has secured a significant market share (Uber Technologies, 2023). Market expansion is a major focus for Uber Eats, as the company rapidly grows its presence locally and internationally. By tailoring its offerings to align with cultural preferences and dining habits, it delivers personalized experiences that resonate with regional audiences (Smith, 2023). Strategic partnerships with cloud kitchens and AI tools for order prediction and route optimization enhance delivery efficiency while reducing operational costs. Sustainability is another priority, with eco-friendly delivery options appealing to environmentally conscious consumers (Johnson, 2024). These strategies collectively drive Uber Eats' success in both established and emerging markets.

Marketing Strategies

In the service industry, marketing strategies are often guided by the 7Ps framework—product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence—which helps enhance customer value, service quality, and brand loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Uber Eats exemplifies this approach through innovative, data-driven marketing strategies that sustain its competitive edge. By analysing customer preferences and geographic trends, it tailors advertising to specific demographics, boosting engagement (Smith, 2020). In Nigeria, Uber Eats collaborates with local restaurants and global food chains, offering exclusive deals, loyalty rewards, and subscription plans like Uber Eats Pass. These initiatives attract new users and retain existing ones by emphasizing convenience and affordability, reinforcing Uber Eats as a leading choice in Nigeria's food delivery market (Nigerian Business Report, 2022). Dynamic social media campaigns and influencer collaborations further amplify brand visibility, particularly among younger demographics. These efforts balance innovation and personalization, driving sustainable growth and solidifying Uber Eats' market leadership (Brown & Green, 2021).

Sales Performance

Sales performance is a key indicator of the effectiveness of business strategies, assessed through metrics like revenue, customer acquisition, and growth (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In South-East Nigeria, Uber Eats has significantly influenced market dynamics and consumer behaviour by offering small and medium-sized restaurants a reliable platform to reach wider audiences (Liu, 2020). Increasing smartphone penetration and internet connectivity have further contributed to the platform's popularity in the region (Akinola & Ibraheem, 2021). Promotions, including discounts and loyalty programs, are crucial in attracting and retaining customers in a competitive market where affordability and convenience are priorities (Zhou & Lee, 2022). Personalized marketing tools, such as targeted promotions, enhance restaurant visibility and drive sales (Liu & Wang, 2022). Additionally, streamlined operations—facilitated by tools for order management, payments, and feedback – enhance the customer experience, fostering repeat business and positive word-of-mouth (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). However, factors like location, menu diversity, and service quality continue to influence sales outcomes (Bressan, 2021).

Small and Medium-Sized Restaurants

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are vital to economic growth, innovation, and job creation, particularly in developing economies. In Nigeria, SMEs account for 48% of GDP and 84% of employment opportunities (SMEDAN, 2021). Small and medium-sized restaurants form a critical part of this ecosystem, contributing to local economies through employment and entrepreneurship. Platforms like Uber Eats enable these restaurants to access larger markets, fostering growth despite challenges like limited financing, high energy costs, and taxation. Initiatives by organizations like SMEDAN aim to address these challenges through infrastructure support and funding programs (SMEDAN, 2021).

Globally, SMEs constitute over 90% of businesses and provide half of global employment, yet they face an unmet financing gap of $5.2 trillion annually (IFC, 2021). Social media has emerged as a powerful marketing tool, allowing small restaurants to reach broader audiences and adapt to competitive pressures (Deloitte, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an essential framework for understanding the adoption of platforms like Uber Eats by small and medium-sized (SMS) restaurants in South-East and South-South Nigeria. Proposed by Fred Davis in 1989, TAM identifies two key factors influencing technology adoption: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. For restaurant owners, the perceived usefulness of Uber Eats is evident in its potential to boost sales, streamline operations, and expand market reach. Simultaneously, ease of use ensures smooth adoption, even for those with limited technological expertise. For customers, features like intuitive navigation, secure payment systems, and timely delivery enhance user experience and foster trust. By addressing these factors, TAM provides valuable insights into how SMS restaurants can leverage Uber Eats to innovate, improve efficiency, and achieve sustainable growth in a competitive market.

Empirical Review

Several studies offer insights into the impact of online food delivery (OFD) services on businesses and consumer behaviour.

Ibrahim et al. (2022) analysed how OFD services influenced the financial performance of Malaysian restaurant businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. While these services extended operational reach, high delivery fees often led to financial losses, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach between marketing success and financial sustainability.

Illysia et al. (2024) investigated university students' satisfaction with OFD apps in Malaysia, focusing on design elements such as visual appeal, navigation quality, and security. Using TAM, the study found that perceived usefulness and ease of use were critical in shaping students' intentions to use these apps.

Kalantarzadeh-Tezerjany (2024) explored the role of novelty-seeking in consumer satisfaction with OFD applications in Kuala Lumpur. The study highlighted that dimensions like reliability and responsiveness in service quality models positively influence satisfaction, while tangibility showed no effect. Findings suggest that marketers should prioritize novelty and well-designed apps to enhance consumer satisfaction.

Deeksha and Jayadatta (2020) examined how COVID-19 reshaped consumer behaviour in India's online food delivery market, focusing on Zomato. The study revealed that despite operational

challenges during the lockdown, OFD platforms played a crucial role in meeting consumer needs. These findings underscore the importance of adaptability in addressing consumer expectations during crises.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive design. Primary data were obtained from respondents via a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were sourced from the Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana Afikpo and Abia State University libraries, the researchers' personal libraries, and reputable online resources. A multistage sampling technique was employed to select the study's 257 respondents. Initially, a purposive sampling method was used to identify establishments whose staff had extensive knowledge of the study's subject matter. These establishments included The Bungalow Restaurant & Lounge (Enugu City), Auntie Grace Kitchen (Awka), Ofe Owerri (Owerri), Nigerian Kitchen (Umuahia), The Yellow Chilli (Aba), Café de L'Opera (Owerri), Tandoor Indian Restaurant (Enugu), Buca Di Beppo (Port Harcourt), Johnny Rockets (Port Harcourt), Calabar Kitchen (Calabar), Macbite Food Ltd (Calabar), Mr. Bigg's (Owerri), Foodies by Somy (Owerri), Imperial Chinese Cuisine (Enugu), Spice Route (Umuahia), Fries and Burgers (Enugu), Cilantro Restaurant (Owerri), Olly's Bite (Enugu), Posh Meal (Umuahia), Food Hub (Owerri), Wok & Grill (Uyo), Maitama Grill (Port Harcourt), Flavours Restaurant (Umuahia), Bottles Restaurant (Port Harcourt), Bella Naija Eatery (Port Harcourt), Metisse Lounge & Restaurant (Uyo), The Mamas Kitchen (Calabar), Tacos and More (Enugu), Quesadilla Grill (Enugu), Moms Café (Port Harcourt), Eko Hotel & Suites (Port Harcourt), Heels and Rolls (Uyo), and others. Subsequently, a random sampling approach was applied to select respondents within these establishments, ensuring diverse and representative participation. The sample size of 257 was determined based on statistical guidelines for achieving sufficient power in cross-sectional studies, with additional considerations for anticipated non-responses. Justifications for the sample size and sampling technique included the need to capture a broad spectrum of opinions while ensuring data reliability.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A captured respondents' demographic information, while Section B focused on thematic issues derived from the study's objectives. Statements in the questionnaire were rated using a Likert scale to assess the level of agreement or disagreement. To ensure the instrument's validity and reliability, a pretest was conducted, and the questionnaire was refined based on expert recommendations. Data collection was conducted using a standardized face-to-face approach. Respondents completed the questionnaires, which were subsequently retrieved by the researcher to ensure data integrity. The survey data were coded and organized using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23.0). Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency, were employed for data analysis, and the results were presented in tables for clarity. Inferential statistical methods, including Linear Regression Analysis and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (SRCC), were applied to test the hypotheses and examine relationships among the variables, thereby providing robust insights into the study's objectives.

Data Presentation

Table 1 Gender of the respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Male	213	83
Female	44	17

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that 213(83.0%) respondents were males while, 44(17.0%) were females. Suggesting that majority of the respondents were males.

Table 2: Age bracket of the respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25 years	7	3
26 – 35 years	33	13
36 – 45 years	136	52
46 years and above	81	32

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 revealed that 7(3.0%) respondents were between the age of 18 and 25, 33(13.0%) aged 26-35 years, 136(52.0%) aged 36 – 45 years while, 81(32.0%) were within the age bracket of 46 and above. This shows that the majority of the respondents were in the age category of 36-45 years.

Table 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Married	32	13
Single	209	81
Divorced	16	6

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 revealed that 32(13.0%) respondents were married, 209(81.0%) were single, while 16(6.0%) were divorced. This shows that the majority of the respondents were single.

Table 4: Highest educational qualification of the respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
O'Level	16	6
ND/HND/B.Sc.	59	23
M.Sc.	100	39
Ph.D.	69	27
No formal education	13	5

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 showed that 16(15%) respondents were O'Level holders, 59(23%) respondents were ND/HND/B.Sc. holders, 100(39%) respondents were M.Sc. holders, and 69(27%) respondents were Ph.D. holders while, 13(5%) respondents had no formal educational degree qualifications. This shows that the majority of the respondents were M.Sc. degree holders.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho1: The use of online food delivery platforms has no significant effect on the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in South-East and South-South Region of Nigeria.

Note: The researchers used Linear Regressions Analysis to test the hypothesis one.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.897[a]	.804	.803	.34096

a. Predictors: (Constant), Online food delivery platforms

Table 6: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	121.545	1	121.545	1045.487	.000[b]
	Residual	29.646	255	.116		
	Total	151.191	256			

a. Dependent Variable: Sales performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Online food delivery platforms

Table 7: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.003	.112		8.939	.000
	Online food delivery platforms	.809	.025	.897	32.334	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sales performance

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.804, indicating that 80.4% of the variation in the dependent variable (Sales Performance) can be explained by the independent variable (Online Food Delivery Platforms). This leaves 19.6% of the variation to be explained by other factors not included in the model. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.803 confirms that the model is robust, even after adjusting for the number of predictors, demonstrating that Online Food Delivery Platforms explain 80.3% of the variations in Sales Performance.

The ANOVA table reveals that the regression model is statistically significant and serves as a strong predictor of the relationship between the variables. This conclusion is supported by an F-statistic value of 1045.487 and a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms the significance of the model at the 5% level.

From the Coefficients Table, the model can be represented using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimator as follows:

$SP = \beta\mathbf{0} + \beta 1OFDP + \mu.$

Where:

SP = Sales Performance

OFDP = Online Food Delivery Platforms

The estimated relationship for the model is:

SP = 1.003 + 0.809OFDP

This implies that for every unit increase in the use of online food delivery platforms, there is an estimated increase of 0.809 units in Sales Performance, holding all other factors constant. The coefficients are statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a strong positive and significant relationship between the use of online food delivery platforms and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in South-East and South-South Region of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between Uber Eats' marketing strategies and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in South-East and South-South Region of Nigeria.

Note: The researchers used Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (SRCC) statistical tool to test the hypothesis two.

Table 8: Correlations

			Uber Eats marketing strategies	Sales performance
Spearman's rho	Uber Eats marketing strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.883**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	257	257
	Sales performance	Correlation Coefficient	.883**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	257	257

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table 8 above shows that a coefficient of 0.883 at p= 0.000 (p = 0.000, p < 0.05). The p-value (0.000) is less than the significant level of 0.05, thus the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. The result of Spearman Rank Correlation test revealed that there is a significant relationship between Uber Eats' marketing strategies and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South Region of Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study identified a strong positive and significant relationship between the use of Online Food Delivery (OFD) platforms and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South Regions of Nigeria. This finding aligns with the empirical work of Ibrahim et al. (2022), who explored the impact of online food delivery services on Malaysian restaurant businesses. Their research highlighted the rapid growth of the food delivery sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by restrictions such as movement control orders and no dine-in policies. While these platforms expanded operational reach and increased revenue potential, challenges such as high delivery charges and hidden fees raised questions about their overall financial benefit. Similarly, the Nigerian context showcases the potential for OFD

platforms to enhance restaurant visibility and sales. However, further investigation is needed to assess the cost implications, long-term sustainability, and potential disparities in benefits across different restaurant sizes and locations.

Although the findings emphasize the advantages of OFD platforms, it is important to critically evaluate the data used in the analysis. The reliance on self-reported sales performance metrics may introduce biases, such as over-reporting due to social desirability or under-reporting due to concerns about competition. Additionally, the study predominantly focuses on small and medium-sized restaurants, which may not fully capture the experiences of larger establishments or informal vendors that also play significant roles in the Nigerian food sector. Future research should incorporate more robust data collection methods, such as financial records or third-party performance assessments, to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

The study also established a significant relationship between Uber Eats' marketing strategies and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South Regions of Nigeria. This finding resonates with the research of Illysia et al. (2024), who examined factors influencing university students' satisfaction with OFD apps in Malaysia. Their findings highlighted the importance of visual design, navigation quality, and information design in fostering user engagement and trust. By applying these insights, Uber Eats can refine its marketing strategies to not only attract more users but also strengthen customer loyalty, ultimately boosting restaurant sales.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To deepen the analysis, the study should consider broader implications for policy and industry practices. Policymakers could explore strategies to regulate delivery charges and hidden fees to ensure fair profitability for restaurants. Industry stakeholders might also invest in capacity-building initiatives to help restaurant owners maximize the benefits of digital transformation, such as training programs on leveraging data analytics or enhancing online customer engagement. Furthermore, a closer examination of the environmental impact of OFD platforms, such as packaging waste and carbon emissions from deliveries, could inform more sustainable practices in the sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings reveal a robust positive relationship between the adoption of online food delivery platforms and the sales performance of small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria. Uber Eats' marketing strategies also significantly influence these restaurants' sales, highlighting the importance of digital platforms in driving growth. These insights underscore the transformative potential of technology in the food industry.

The study made the following recommendations:

i. Small and medium-sized restaurants should enhance their digital presence and actively collaborate with online delivery platforms to boost visibility and sales.

ii. Uber Eats should tailor localized marketing campaigns to further engage and support restaurants in the South-East and South-South region of Nigeria.

iii. The researcher recommends that further investigations on this topic be directed towards restaurants located in the Northern or Western regions of Nigeria.

LIMITATIONS

However, this study faced problems in accessing all staff members of the selected small and medium-sized restaurants in the South-East and South-South regions of Nigeria. Another notable issue was the respondents' behaviour, which was addressed with the assistance of two research experts who were available daily to administer and retrieve the questionnaires.

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