# RESTAURANT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PRACTICES IN KATSINA METROPOLIS, KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA: DILEMMA AND WAY FORWARD
## *A Comparative Case Study of Facebook and Twitter*

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## ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to identify restaurant social media marketing practices by comparing the challenges and benefits of Facebook and twitter as platforms of social media in marketing of hospitality products and services. After reviewing relevant literature, multiple-case study design was used, and qualitative data was obtained from the respondents using structured interviews. Purposive sampling was adopted for sampling both the restaurants and the respondents. The data collected from the respondents was arranged and analysed based on restaurant and questions asked. The study revealed that casual and quick service categories of restaurants pay significant attention to Facebook, while full service and take-out service categories have multiple with Facebook and Twitter as their priority. The study suggests that qualitative and quantitative approaches should be used to include other hospitality sectors for more varied information regarding the effective use of the social media marketing.
**Keywords:** Challenges, Facebook, Marketing, Prospects. Restaurants, Social media, Twitter,

## INTRODUCTION
The Hospitality and other related organisations have now channelled their marketing views to customer value and satisfaction (Dev, Bustchman and Bowen, 2010), and wider range of managerial considerations have now been lifted due to century development in social media. Effective involvement in social media sites by restaurants and other hospitality sectors offers them an array of potential benefits, especially in regards to understanding customers' needs and expectations, disseminating restaurant information as well as reaching potential guests as fast as possible. As such, social media has proved to be a good marketing and

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effective management tool for hospitality businesses. *Facebook* is among the well known and widely adapted social media platform and its profiles have many advantages when related to marketing than its counterparts among the social media sites. It provides photos, videos, and longer descriptions of products. Videos of organization's products can show when the product can be used and how to use it. These also can include testimonials as other followers can comment on the product pages for others to see. Facebook can link back to the product's Twitter page as well as send out event reminders. Facebook promotes a product in real-time and brings customers in (Vivek, Sanjay and Shweta, 2012).

*Twitter* provides opportunities for companies to market and promote their products and services based on individual level. Brief about the company's product can be explained in few words that followers are likely to access and read and the messages appear on followers' home pages (Michael, 2010). These Messages from the company are posted to the company's product website, some other social media sites such as Facebook profile, photos, videos, and so on. The Twitter site owned by a company provides a conversation link between the product and the followers, and through the medium followers have the opportunity to spend more time interacting with the product online. This conversation between followers and the product can proceed from the individuals to a wider range of online and word of mouth advertisement. Twitter link can therefore promotes company's product in real-time and brings in more turnover of customers to the company (Lazer, 1973).

## Social Media Marketing Practice and its Benefits to Restaurant Marketing

According to Achrol and Kotler (1999), Due to technological advancement which led to the development of internet and the 90s mode of marketing that channelled its views to customer orientation, restaurants and other hospitality sectors are not left behind. The advancement and development has transformed 21st century marketing approach to three factors namely; society, network and information. Today, social media as part of the transformed form of marketing tool (Dev *et al.*, 2010), provides dynamic content and rich insights from the various special interest groups engaged in tourism and hospitality. However, in some part of the world according to Sigala (2011) few hospitality businesses, restaurants in particular take advantage of the opportunities provided by social media platforms to improve their business performance. Similarly, when researches on restaurant and other hospitality sectors are

considered social media as one of their marketing tool still needs more attention (Line and Runyan, 2012). De Matos and Rossi (2008) are of the view that, Word-of-Mouth (WOM) was the major form of advertising as its actions arise from the guests' level of commitment, perceived value, quality, trust, satisfaction and loyalty, before the development of social media which serves as an extension of the former. Despite being Word-of Mouth an informal form of communication tool of companies, it still concerns both customers and other businesses (Mazzarol *et al.*, 2007).

The effect of word-of-mouth have nowadays widened world-wide due to the advancement of internet technologies, driven largely by the marketing world concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Today, SM tools extend from blogs and microblogs (Twitter) to online communities (Facebook, TA) and from media-sharing sites (YouTube) to social knowledge-sharing sites (Wikipedia) (Leung *et al.*, 2013). As a result, many new opportunities for hotel and restaurant businesses have emerged that enable active and intensive engagement with existing and prospective customers (Sigala, 2012).

Williams (2015) states that, Social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Increased communication for organizations fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Additionally, social media serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns. Lodging Interactive (2015) opined that, Companies, big and small, use social media or networking sites as a new marketing tool to connect with their customers and generate interest in their business. Hotels and restaurants have begun to move marketing resources from traditional advertising to digital and social platforms. They are investing more human and financial resources in social media. Needles (2013) states that well managed social media sites can create a virtual relationship with existing customers or convince a first-time guest to visit.

The benefits of social media to restaurant and other hospitality sectors marketing cannot be over emphasize as it offers a wide range of opportunities for restaurants of different categories to market their products and services and reach out hundreds of millions of customers at a shortest possible time (Syed-Ahmad and Murphy, 2010). One of its benefits to restaurants as profit oriented organisations is inexpensiveness, as instead of expensive photos in brochures or advertisements in mass

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media, photos uploaded by through the restaurant's website or by their customers may create a good impression of the restaurant to customers.

## METHODOLOGY
### Research Design, Sampling, Instrumentation and Data Collection

A holistic multiple- case study design was adopted for this study because of the variations of the restaurants both in category and mode of marketing. The aim of this study is to identify the problems facing social media marketing by restaurants in Katsina State and the expected solutions to the problems identified. This is by comparing Facebook and Twitter as the social media marketing tools. Research questions formulated based on the aim of the study are as follows:

*Q1.* Is Facebook and Twitter part of the restaurants social media marketing tools?

*Q2.* Which among the two contribute more to the marketing aspect of the restaurant?

*Q3.* What benefits have the restaurants gained through social media marketing specifically Facebook and Twitter?

*Q4.* What are the problems facing restaurants with regards to marketing through Facebook and Twitter?

Samples of the respondents were selected from restaurants within Katsina Metropolis, Katsina State, Nigeria, and they were selected based on their category. Purposive sampling was adopted in sampling both the restaurants and the respondents for the study. Characteristics of the restaurants and the respondents based on their Facebook and Twitter social media marketing practices are presented in Table I. As seen in Table I, restaurants were sampled based on their category, while respondents based on their ranks in the restaurants. As restaurants differ from each other based on their category so they differ in their marketing processes, and with the believe that multiple cases in research enable a broader scope of questions under study this study (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and sampling of extreme cases so as to observe contrasting patter. Based on this reason, this study was design as a comparative case study, a holistic multiple-case type (Yin, 1994). As a result, a comparable analysis of Facebook and Twitter usage in different categories of restaurants was used.

Table I                Restaurants and their Social Media Marketing Characteristics

| S/N | Restaurant Category | Number Sampled and Sex | Age of the Respondents | Title of Respondents | Social Media Marketing Practice | Facebook or Twitter Usage | Year of Social Media Usage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Casual Service Restaurant | 2 (Both Male) | 27 and 33 years | General Manager | Yes | Facebook | 5:3 |
| 2 | Full Service Restaurant | 2 (Both Male | 31 and 34 years | General Manager | Yes | Both | 11:8 |
| 3 | Take-Out Service Restaurant | 2 (Both Male) | 25 and 41 years | General Manager | Yes | Both | 9:7 |
| 4 | Quick Service Restaurant | 2 (Both Male) | 24 and 39 years | General Manager | Yes | Facebook | 4:3 |

Data were collected from the target respondents (General Managers) using structured interviews in May, 2017. According to Creswell (2012) in qualitative research; interviews are done when the researcher asks one or two respondents general or open-ended questions and record their answers. While Yin (1994) opined that, in case study research, interviews are essential as they maintain a targeted and insightful data collection process. Based on this, a written face-to-face interview which lasted for 40 minutes and recorded (using interview schedule guide) was conducted with the respondents. Four questions formulated based on the research questions as indicated in Table II, were raised to the respondents during the interview.

After the interviews and data collected from the participants based on the interview schedule guide, the data were reviewed, grouped and placed according to restaurant category.

**Data Analysis**
The data collected was analysed using verbatim report format to reveal the exact roles of Facebook and Twitter as marketing tools practiced by restaurants in the study area.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Variables of the Respondents

It was found that all the respondents sampled for the study (Restaurant mangers) are male which are capable of working at different times of the day and night for successful operation of their organisations. It was also identified that majority of them are younger adults that is, they are between the ages of 21 to 40 years, with only a single respondent who happened to be an older adult, that above 40 years. The respondents are all managers and their restaurants located at the capital city of the state.

### Descriptive Result, Qualitative Analysis and Analysis of Effects of Social Media      Marketing Practice factors

The study finding indicates that restaurant businesses put more emphasis on Facebook and Twitter as they regarded the two as good and effective marketing tools for their products and services. As presented in Table I, there are four categories of restaurants in the study area namely Casual Service (CS), Full service (FS), Take-out Service (TOS), and Quick Service (QS) restaurants. The restaurants were opened and are in operation from 3-11 years, as none is below 3 years in operation. Regardless of their category and years in operation, all the restaurants have indicated that they are using social media as their marketing tool in which Facebook and Twitter among the effective ones. Moreover, the study also reveals that restaurants in the study area are using both mass and social media marketing despite putting more emphasis on the social media because of its inexpensiveness for marketing campaign. This finding is similar to Williams (2015) who states that, Social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Increased communication for organizations fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Additionally, social media serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns.

Table II:     Study Questions

| S/N | Question | Scope |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Is Facebook and Twitter part of the Restaurant's Social Media Marketing tool? | *Importance of Social Media *If social media is considered an effective marketing tool *Whether Facebook and Twitter are part of their social network sites *Whether they have mixed method of marketing |
| 2. | Which among the two (Facebook and Twitter) contribute more to the marketing aspect of the restaurant? | *If there are regular suggestions and review *Frequency of usage *Impact/Importance of each *Satisfying guest needs and expectations |
| 3. | What benefits have the restaurants gained through Facebook and Twitter social media marketing? | *Comparison of the restaurants marketing performance before and after using Facebook and Twitter as their marketing tool. *Positive or Negative result obtained. |
| 4. | What are the problems facing restaurants with regards to marketing through Facebook and Twitter? | *If there is problem with regards to cost implication when compared with mass media *If there is problem with exposing competitive advantage to the competitors *If there is lack of well define social media goals. |

## Facebook and Twitter in Social Media Marketing

The study was able to find out the following as roles of Facebook and Twitter in social media marketing after the results of the interview with General Managers of the restaurants was analysed.

• Promotion of products and services on an individual level, in real-time and bring customers in.

• They now replace brochures as videos can show when a product can be used as well as how to use it.

• Customers review with regard to the restaurants products and services are always available online.

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• Positive and Negative comments which will help both the restaurant and customers are made through electronic word-of-mouth.
• Their profiles are highly public with audiences often around hundred of friends, providing motivation to create good impression.

Despite the above mentioned roles, the study further found that, these various categories of restaurants varies in conjunction with their Facebook and twitter usage for marketing purposes. Managers of Casual Service and Quick Service Restaurants admitted that they normally encourage their customers to post their suggestions, reviews and feedback through the Facebook social network site of the restaurants. In order to fully attract and satisfy their customers' needs and expectations, Managers of Full Service and Take-out Service Categories of restaurants in the study area indicated that they posses multiple social network sites with Facebook and Twitter as their higher priorities.

## Contributions of Facebook and Twitter on Marketing of Restaurant Products    and Services

Social Media sites such as Facebook and Twitter helps a lot in facilitating many marketing activities and different people employed different social media tools to communicate online with other users. In casual service restaurants, because of the nature of their operations, the manager is in full position of control to their social network site. It was sited from a key informant that *"I am responsible for everything about our social network site. I always update it with new information about our products and services on daily basis, any review, suggestion or feedback from our customers is checked and necessary action incorporated into my posts, thanks to Facebook as it is helping our business a lot"* (RM 1). Different restaurants have similar view about the contribution as based on the key informant from Full Service Restaurant *"in our restaurant we regard social media as a strategic tool for marketing as our Facebook and twitter social network sites are helping us a lot in reaching our customers at ease. We are everyday receiving new followers in our Twitter account and our customers are responding to our posts in our Facebook page. This is why i kept updating the sites two to three times a day, because once i found any comment positive or negative, i tried to respond and our customers are happy about that"* (RM 3). His counterpart another key informant from another full service restaurant added this *"once message is set to posting to social media site, we customize it, then we deliver it over our multiple platforms"* (RM 4).

The study found that Take-out Service Restaurants a little differ in their social media adoption as a tool for marketing to their counter-parts. It was retrieved from key informant from Take-out service restaurants that *"because of the mode of our operation, we maintain Facebook and Twitter accounts. But what we do in maintaining these accounts is that, we maximize our potentials by sending users that follows our Twitter and Facebook accounts different messages instead of one single message"* (RM 5). It was gathered from his counterpart a key informant from the other take-out service restaurant that, *"we observe nowadays that consumers are now looking for how a product of a company is before patronizing it, we then take pictures and videos of our products and post to our social network sites in order to convince our customers we care about them"* (RM 6). Regarding social media marketing, Quick service restaurants shows similar features with casual service restaurants as it was gathered form key informant that *"I am the manager of the restaurant and i control our Facebook online account myself. I tried every day to post updates and check reviews, complaints and suggestions from our customers and take necessary action. My supportive staff are always busy with customers as that is the nature of our operation, as such they don't have time to check social media site when on duty"* (RM 7). While his counterpart another key informant from the other sampled quick-service restaurant added that *"one of the impact of social media marketing we realise in our restaurant is that, customers booked ahead of time , so that normally gave us the opportunity to prepare before their arrival and they use to be happy when their product is ready on their arrival"* (RM 8).

This study finding is similar to Williams (2015) who states that, Social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Increased communication for organizations fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Additionally, social media serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns.

## Comparative Benefits of Facebook and Twitter to Restaurant Social Media Marketing

Being the restaurants profit oriented organisations and despite being them of different categories, their actions toward online marketing is almost similar with little variation about the type of social network site they operate with. As such all the key informants used in conducting the study accepted the critical role of social media marketing toward the

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development of their various restaurants. It was however, retrieved form key informant that *"Facebook is our favourite social network site and our customers are not complaining about it. This is because it provides an opportunity for person to build self-esteem, it makes conversation between us and our customers easier and it allow us to portray the images of our products to our customers so easily"* (RM 1). Similar categories of restaurants have similar view with regard to social media flatforms used for marketing as key informant from similar restaurant was quoted as saying *"One good thing to Facebook is that, when our customers come to the restaurant, you normally found friends gathered themselves on 1, 2, 3, or even 4 stations. This is an indication that, they added each other as friends through Facebook* (RM2). There are indications that Facebook is used for marketing purposes by restaurant of different categories, as it was retrieved from key informant from another category of restaurant that *"there are customers who cannot express their feelings one-on-one when they visit the restaurant, but i always wonder and feel happy the way they normally express themselves which indicated they feel more convenient and comfortable with our Facebook account"* (RM 7). His counterpart from key informant from another quick service restaurant added that *"I realized starting conversation with some customers is difficult but our Facebook page normally provides the starting point and within short time trust is developed"* (RM 8).

However, some restaurants are using multiple social media sites for their marketing activities. Key informant from full service restaurant was quoted as showing the benefits of social media flatforms to their marketing *"both our social network sites are important to our business as they are contributing toward achieving our target, but they are all incomparable with Facebook, as more than 70% of our customers are on it"* (RM 3). It was retrieved from key informant from the same category of restaurant (full service) saying, *"Twitter is also good because in our restaurant we like posting picture on the platform and our followers are enjoying it"* (RM 4). Key informant from another category of restaurant using multiple social media site was quoted From Take-out service restaurant, the key informant said that, *"the importance of social network site to our business cannot be over emphasize most especially Facebook as it is increasing our customers day-by-day and we are seeing a lot of turnover. Our Twitter site is also not left behind based on the contribution as it is second to Facebook"* (RM 5).. Key informant from the same category of restaurant was of the view that *"we considered*

*Facebook to be a beneficial marketing tool in terms of revenue generation as make a lot of sales through it which generates a lot of revenue to the restaurant. The only one we can compare with this capacity among our social media sites is twitter followed by WhatsApp. We are generating revenue from these two but not like what we are generating through Facebook"* (RM 6).

This study finding corroborate with Leung, law, VanHoof and Buhalis (2013) In addition to providing promotional opportunities, social media can be among the marketing strategies of restaurants in terms of product distribution, communication, management and market research (Leung *et al.*, 2013). The finding is also similar to Vivek, Sanjay and Shweta, (2012) that Facebook is now a direct competitor to many social network sites such as Google, Twitter, WhatsApp, Pinterest, and so on in online marketing. With regard to Twitter this study finding is similar to Hanim and Metin, (2015) that part of the benefits of Twitter to companies that uses it as their marketing tool is that, it helped lift their brands, enhance their customer relationship and improved direct sales due to direct contact with the customer through the platform.

## Problems of using Facebook and Twitter as Marketing Tools by Restaurants

In social media it is difficult to control what and how the people are talking since the control
of information has shifted from marketers to consumers. What many people think as a major challenge to online restaurant business, pricing, is now not a major problem, as now each and every restaurant monitor its performance against their competitors. The transparency and consistency in pricing causes increase in trust to existing and to be restaurant customers. One of the major threats of Facebook and Twitter marketing to restaurants is negative and provocative opinions and discussion coupled with false rumours from customers who may have negative opinion about the restaurant. Even though the restaurant is ever ready in tackling this kind of situation, it is still given them much headache. It was quote from a key informant that *"there is also the involvement of staff in marketing activities as in some firms and some managers' feel that employees spending time on the Internet might improve the employee satisfaction and efficiency* (RM 5). Whereas some key informant think that *"the time spend on Facebook is directly off the time spend on work due to the nature of their operation* (RM 7).

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However, *"some restaurants are having the threat of revealing their competitive advantage to their competitors as some of the managers responsible for control of the restaurant's social media site are not trained enough to tackle this menace* (RM 4). While *"some restaurants are facing serious problem due to lack of effective social media tools as that of their competitors which is part of the major reason why their competitors are several steps ahead of them* (RM 7). Based on a key informant *"at the beginning we face challenges regarding purpose of our social media activities and target of our social media message even though we have now overcome that, but many restaurants are still facing those challenges"* (RM 1). On the other hand key informant emphasized that *"as chain group restaurant, all our social media activities is controlled at our head office. So the marketing and other related activities are carried out there and they channel whatever to us to implement based on development, customers complaint, reviews or suggestions"* (RM 2".

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All restaurant businesses in the study area view Facebook and Twitter social media sites as good marketing tools based on more opportunities they posses with regard to marketing than challenges. They consider inexpensiveness, customer engagement, speed, two-way traffic than mass media, efficiency, straightforwardness and consistency of their online content and prices to be the factors generally needed in building general customer relationship in having returned customers to their restaurants. As a challenge, this study identified the fact that Facebook and Twitter are critical social media marketing tools utilised by restaurants of different categories, despite impeding factors such as hash jacking, revealing competitive advantage, negative and provocative opinions and rumours related to it. In addition, having high turnover based on having returned customers is a priority for all the restaurant businesses included in this study. This supports the way forward brought about to restaurant social media marketing practice by Facebook and twitter.

Casual Service and Quick Service restaurants based on this study are more sensitive to Facebook online marketing based on the immediate impact it has on their turnover of customers. Based on this reason, Facebook will become of more advantage in term of marketing to these categories of restaurants. Moreover, Full Service and Take-out Service categories of restaurants in the study area adapted both Facebook and

Twitter as part of their marketing based on the nature of their operations. This shows they are capable of maintaining multiple social media tools based on their capital and staff strength. All the restaurants used in this study are located in the capital city of Katsina, they therefore, have the opportunities of all the technologies in the metropolis and constant maintenance of the servers of the social media companies.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the management of the restaurants in the study area should try to overcome the impeding factors hindering restaurant social media marketing practices. They should also try to see to it that, the objective of having social media marketing that is, having high turnover and returned customers is always achieved.

## Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Despite the study has achieved its aim of identifying the restaurant social media marketing practices based on Facebook and Twitter, there are some limitations which may prompt some further research. The sample group represents only restaurant businesses in the capital city, and the study uses only qualitative techniques. Therefore there is need for similar empirical study which may comprise both qualitative and quantitative techniques in hotels and other hospitality sectors within the metropolis and in the Local Government Areas of the State Conducting this study may provide more insights into restaurant social media marketing practices not only using Facebook and Twitter but together with their counterparts, and findings of the study will generate the effectiveness acceptability of the social media marketing to both restaurants and other hospitality sectors.

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