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The Impact Of Online Restaurant Reputation On Consumer Behavior And Business Performance

Murjanatu Salihu Barau¹; Ibrahim Muhammad² & Aisha Adamu Machika³

^{1&2}Department of Home and Hospitality Management
Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic, P.M.B 2052, Katsina, Katsina state, Nigeria.

³Science Department,
Community College of Arabic and Islamic Studies Goruba, Katsina, Katsina State, Nigeria.
E-mail Address: murjanatusb@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of online restaurant reputation on consumer behavior and business performance in the Katsina Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. With the rapid growth of online food delivery services and digital reviews, the online reputation of restaurants has become increasingly crucial in influencing consumer decisions. This research examines how online reviews and ratings affect customer patronage, loyalty, and the overall performance of restaurant businesses. Data were collected through surveys and interviews with restaurant customers, owners and food bloggers, providing perceptions into consumer engagement with online reviews and its implications for dining choices. The findings reveal a strong correlation between positive online reviews and increased customer loyalty, while negative reviews significantly impact sales and overall business performance. This study underscores the importance of maintaining a positive online presence and offers practical recommendations for restaurants to leverage their digital reputation as a strategic tool for growth in an increasingly competitive and digitalized marketplace.

.Keywords: Restaurant; Consumer; Business; Performance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The meteoric growth of e-commerce makes it an ever-important area to study. Even in traditional industries, well-established offline firms have adopted new online sales channels that aim to increase their revenue. This has led to the hybridization of strictly brick-and-mortar stores, which now operate both online and offline. In fact, by 2012, more than 80 percent of U.S. retailers sold merchandise through both online and offline channels (Wang, Song, and Yang 2012). One of the most prolific applications of this recent hybridization is in the restaurant industry, with the emergence of online food delivery services. Delivery transactions made up six percent of total US restaurant sales in 2017 and are estimated to reach 40 percent of all restaurant sales by 2020 (Morgan Stanley Research 2017). However, the extent to which these online sales are incremental causing overall restaurant sales to increase—or, alternatively, drawn away from brick-and-mortar sales, has not been quantified.

Online food delivery exemplifies how e-commerce disrupts traditional markets. The influx of new food delivery firms has led to rapid growth in total transactions and revenue for the emerging industry. While online food delivery services offer additional channels for potential revenue, they also pose the risk of

cannibalization, where brick-and-mortar sales may decline as consumers who previously purchased in-store shift towards predominantly online purchasing behavior. Internet connectivity has been a fundamental source of information that many consumers have utilized, leading to significant changes in consumer behavior. One of the most notable transformations in contemporary consumer behavior is the shift from being passive to becoming actively engaged and informed (Parikh et al., 2016). Online assessments have revolutionized customers' purchasing behavior in the restaurant industry, and many scholars have investigated the implications of online reviews in this sector (Taylor & Atay, 2016; Yan, Wang, & Chau, 2015). When customers possess sufficient information about the quality of a service or product before making a purchase, they are more likely to consider this information beforehand (Parikh et al., 2014). Additionally, online restaurant reviews enable potential customers to connect with other users and make informed decisions by reading evaluations that match their criteria. Taylor and Aday (2016) conclude that customers tend to pay more attention to restaurants with positive reviews rather than negative ones.

1.1 The Evolution and Impact of Online Food Delivery Services on the Restaurant Industry

Online food delivery services have existed for several years, with chain restaurants initially creating websites for take-out orders. However, these early services were restricted to their own outlets. Over time, individual restaurants and even grocery stores began offering online delivery services, a trend that started in the early 21st century (Pozzi, 2012; Relihan, 2017). However, the rise of generalized online food delivery platforms that cater to multiple restaurants has only gained widespread popularity in the last decade, and their growth has been rapid. By 2020, these services accounted for 6% of the restaurant market, backed by significant revenue growth—over 14% annually in the last four years. Market share is expected to double by 2025 (Morgan Stanley Research, 2020). The rapid expansion of these platforms has even prompted some restaurants to redesign their business models, adopting a “delivery-only” approach (Bond, 2019). This evolution signals a major shift in the restaurant industry. Grubhub, the first online food delivery company, was established in 2004 with the aim of replacing paper menus with a unified website. Since then, it has evolved into a platform that connects delivery drivers to restaurants for customer orders. Other companies like Postmates and DoorDash, founded in 2011 and 2013 respectively, operate similarly but differ slightly in their approach. These platforms provide restaurant menus and hire delivery drivers, akin to Uber or Lyft's model. These firms employed similar growth strategies, beginning in select cities and expanding as they gained success.

Consumers using online food delivery services share distinct behaviors. According to Hirschberger et al. (2017), 86% of deliveries are made to the customer's home, and 74% of sales occur on weekends. Additionally, in 2017, 43% of online delivery users said it replaced a dine-in restaurant meal, up from 38% in the previous year, indicating gradual substitution as online channels grow (Morgan Stanley, 2017). Given that online delivery now constitutes a significant portion of many restaurants' revenue, cutting these channels is not an option. The COVID-19 pandemic has further fueled the demand for online food delivery. For instance, in China, orders surged by 20% in January 2020 alone, and similar trends are emerging in the U.S., with companies like DoorDash reducing or waiving fees to accommodate rising demand (Keshner, 2020). As long as stay-at-home orders persist and sit-down restaurants remain closed, the reliance on online food delivery will likely increase, although it may not fully replace pre-pandemic restaurant spending. As the pandemic continues, the demand for contactless delivery services is expected to grow, underscoring the need to understand consumer behavior in this fast-evolving landscape.

1.2 The Role of Online Reviews in Shaping Consumer Decisions in Tourism and Hospitality

Online appraisals are highly valued for their recency, which is crucial for determining the significance of feedback in organizations, especially in industries such as travel and hospitality. Cheung and Thadani (2016) highlighted that recency is a key factor when it comes to customer response. Tran (2015) argued that high rankings for restaurants and tourist attractions positively impact consumer ratings, contributing significantly to online success. This, in turn, influences appraisals and rankings, such as five-star ratings, which boost visibility and usage. Conyette (2012) found that consumer feedback directly affects booking intentions, echoing Purnawirawan, De Pelsmacker, and Dens (2012), who suggested that positive perceptions of products and services create favorable attitudes among customers, especially when reviews

reflect customer satisfaction. Such reviews are vital for encouraging bookings, as they provide prospective customers with reassurance. Ladhari and Michaud (2015) emphasized that the study of trust in this context reveals that competence and integrity are critical for hotels to build customer trust, as highlighted by Wang et al. (2014). A trustworthy environment minimizes transaction uncertainty, and trust directly influences booking intentions, serving as a major determinant of sales success.

In tourism, the creation of personal and memorable experiences is essential for increasing customer engagement. Platforms that share travel reviews offer options for tourism, dining, and accommodation, becoming key tools for marketing tourism services. Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer argued that tourists collaborate closely with service agents to co-create unique experiences, which enhance customer satisfaction and encourage travel-related purchasing behaviors. As the tourism industry evolves, this shift towards experience creation becomes central to co-creating value for stakeholders. Online reviews now serve as a crucial source of information for consumers, with studies reporting that 93% of customers rely on them for insights before making purchase decisions. On average, consumers consult seven reviews before determining whether a business is trustworthy (Figueiredo and Castro, 2019). Beverley et al. (2016) found that online shoppers in the tourism sector view reviews as an efficient way to compare and evaluate products, helping to mitigate the risk associated with online purchases. Erkan and Evans (2016) also emphasized that reviews are seen as trustworthy because they provide objective opinions, significantly influencing consumer purchasing decisions.

1.3 The Role of Social Media and Online Customer Reviews in Consumer Behavior and Business Strategy

In today's highly competitive market, businesses face significant challenges in attracting customers and convincing them to choose their products over those of competitors. Understanding the consumer purchasing process is essential for success in this environment (Yonezawa & Richards, 2017). Companies can no longer rely solely on keeping production costs low and driving high sales volumes. Instead, the focus has shifted to meeting consumer needs and achieving customer satisfaction to maintain a competitive edge (Wang & Ji, 2010). To develop effective marketing strategies, businesses must gain a deep understanding of both the consumer decision-making process and the specific requirements of their target customers (Yonezawa & Richards, 2017). A key development in recent years has been the rise of social media platforms, which allow people to interact, share information, and exchange ideas in ways that were not possible before. Prominent platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have become integral to how consumers search for and share information (Kane et al., 2014). According to research, 40 percent of customers begin their information search on search engines, but they often turn to social media platforms to read the opinions of other customers. Social media plays a crucial role in helping consumers evaluate and narrow down product choices by offering insights and recommendations from others. After making a purchase, many customers share their experiences online, motivated by a desire to enhance a product's reputation, help fellow consumers, or feel a sense of belonging to a customer community (Yang & Tang, 2019). Online Customer Reviews (OCRs), in particular, have become a powerful marketing tool, as word-of-mouth communication through social media has gained prominence. The influence of OCRs on new product sales has grown significantly, underscoring the importance of this form of digital feedback in shaping consumer behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

1.4 Challenges in Analyzing Restaurant Services and the Role of Online Reviews in Consumer Decision-Making

Restaurant services present unique challenges for analysis due to their quality, variability, freshness, and non-standard characteristics. As such, understanding the factors influencing customer interactions and satisfaction in the service context can be even more intriguing than in product contexts. From a marketing perspective, food companies and restaurants face a significant research problem regarding the consumption patterns of their target audience. This study aids marketers in crafting effective campaigns by enhancing their awareness through feedback and word-of-mouth (WOM), which can extend their market reach. As noted by Hospitality Insights (2019), consumers in the digital age increasingly depend on reviews to make informed decisions, mitigate risks, and select the best options from menus. Moreover,

online reviews add significant value for food brands seeking to capture a larger market share, even with limited WOM and feedback on social media platforms.

However, it's essential to note that online reviews are not the sole concern for millennials when making purchases; product features and prices also significantly influence their preferences (Devedi, 2017). Therefore, this research will assist marketers in identifying key considerations related to online reviews that could enhance sales and lead to positive outcomes. Additionally, social capital theory underpins this research, highlighting the impact of online reviews on consumer purchasing behavior. The Internet provides users with extensive information, among which online reviews serve as a potent tool for influencing consumer choices in the food industry, applicable to restaurants, grocery stores, and food products (Kurdi & Alhamad, 2022). Such reviews offer valuable insights into product quality and customer service, with an expanding body of research exploring their effects on consumer behavior (Zhao, 2019). Nonetheless, most existing studies focus on developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding how online reviews affect consumer behavior in developing nations. The choice dilemma arises in consumer purchasing behavior, often leading to predetermined conclusions (Taylor, 1974). Each choice carries inherent risks, as consumers cannot predict the outcome of their transactions until completion. The potential loss whether monetary, functional, psychological, or social can deter consumers. However, acquiring knowledge about products can empower consumers by reducing perceived risks associated with their purchasing decisions. Information gained through word-of-mouth can diminish consumers' sense of danger (Wever, 2020). According to dual process theory, social circles influence individuals for two primary reasons: to achieve societal acceptance and recognition (normative influence) and to clarify uncertainties by obtaining information from trusted sources (informational influence). Normative influence involves conforming to favorable expectations, while informational influence pertains to accepting knowledge from others as reality. Such influences become crucial when stimuli are ambiguous or social conflict arises, contributing to individual uncertainty. Consumer buying behavior examines the processes by which individuals, groups, or organizations select, acquire, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to fulfill their needs, as well as the implications of these processes on consumers and society (Kotler et al., 2014). This field merges art and science, striving to understand decision-making processes individually and collectively, while considering demographic, personality, and economic factors, alongside social and psychological influences. The tendency to trust a seller in transactions represents a consumer's predisposition to either trust or distrust (Mazhar & Anwar, 2012). Consumers often align their decisions with prevailing opinions, believing that the collective judgment on navigating complex circumstances is more accurate than their own. Key determinants include the subject matter of the information, its communicator, and the target audience. To avoid social isolation, individuals frequently conform to group norms and beliefs, showcasing normative influences that shape online behavior. The influence of the crowd is also pertinent in WOM interactions, where consumers imitate decisions based on the volume of reviews, reflecting the service's popularity as determined by collective preferences. Research by Donthu et al. (2021) indicates that customer evaluations and WOM significantly motivate other consumers to acquire specific items due to social influences. Consumers' attitudes and intentions toward purchases are often captured through their online reviews. Additional studies demonstrate that positive reviews positively impact sales, while negative reviews deter consumers from purchasing (Apriliani & Hudrasyah, 2018). Consequently, consumers' preferences for information sources play a crucial role in the market; while some prioritize peer opinions, others seek information from dedicated review platforms.

Findings by Nurcahyanie et al. (2021) reveal that customer reactions vary with age; millennials are more inclined to adjust their purchasing behavior based on online evaluations, whereas older demographics consider a broader range of factors before making recommendations. Consequently, online reviews wield significant influence over purchasing behavior, especially among millennials. Sloomweg and Rowson (2018) found that millennials predominantly rely on online reviews, particularly male opinions, to guide their decisions, revealing gender disparities in categorizing evaluations. As such, marketers increasingly depend on online evaluations to engage millennials effectively. Despite concerns about cannibalizing in-person dining, 60% of restaurant operators reported increased sales from offering online delivery services

(Technomic Food Trends, 2018). However, while online platforms bring incremental sales, they also pose challenges to profitability. High service fees typically 20-30% per transaction are charged to both consumers and restaurants, cutting into restaurant margins (Dunn, 2018; Thompson, 2019).

Therefore, this research seeks to address these gaps by investigating the impact of online restaurant reputation on consumer behavior and business performance within Katsina Local government of Katsina state with the aim of providing awareness and practical recommendations for restaurant stakeholders navigating the complexities of the digital age.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of online restaurant reputation on consumer behavior and business performance. By examining the relationship between online perceptions and real-world outcomes, the study seeks to understand the influence of digital reputation management on the dynamics of the restaurant industry.

Objectives:

- i. To analyze the correlation between online restaurant reputation and consumer behavior, including factors such as patronage, brand loyalty, and decision-making processes.
- ii. To assess the effects of positive and negative online reviews on consumer perceptions and dining choices.
- iii. To investigate the effects of online restaurant reputation on key business performance metrics and to understand its implications for restaurant stakeholders.
- iv. To provide practical recommendations for restaurant operators seeking to leverage their online presence to drive success in an increasingly digital landscape.

2.0 RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Study Area

The research was conducted in Katsina Local Government Area, located in Katsina State, Nigeria. Katsina is a prominent city in northern Nigeria and serves as the capital of Katsina State. It is situated approximately 160 miles east of Sokoto and 84 miles northwest of Kano, near the border with Niger. Katsina is a key agricultural hub, known for producing groundnuts, cotton, hides, millet, and guinea corn, and is home to industries such as peanut oil milling and steel production. The city's population is predominantly Muslim, with the majority belonging to the Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups.

2.3 Data collection

The Respondents of the research are selected Restaurant Customers which are crucial in determining how online reputation affects consumer behavior. The research sample regular patrons and those who have dined at restaurants with a strong online presence in Katsina city along with the Restaurant Owners/Managers to assess how reputation impacts business performance, customer retention and operations. Food Bloggers/Reviewers also play a role in giving the required information for the research through Questionnaire Distribution and Interview.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

To determine the relationship between online restaurant reputation and consumer behavior, Correlation Analysis was used to measure variables such as the frequency of checking online reviews and the likelihood of restaurant visits to compare the business performance across restaurants ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used with different online reputations (positive, negative, neutral reviews). Then, Apply regression analysis was apply to predict the influence of online reputation (independent variable) on sales and performance metrics (dependent variables like sales, customer loyalty, and patronage).

3.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The goals of this section is to present the figures as well as tabular results and discussion on the impact of online restaurant reputation on consumer behavior and business performance in Katsina State of Nigeria. Using the data obtained from the questionnaire and interview administered.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondent

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18 - 25 years	89	68.5	68.5	68.5
26 - 35 years	27	20.8	20.8	89.2
36 - 45 years	14	10.8	10.8	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	
Gender				
Male	20	15.4	15.4	15.4
Female	110	84.6	84.6	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	

The age distribution of respondents shows a significant concentration in the younger demographic, with 68.5% aged 18–25, followed by 20.8% in the 26–35 range, and 10.8% aged 36–45. This implies that the sample is predominantly composed of younger individuals, who are generally more digitally engaged and likely to interact with online platforms. As a result, this demographic may be more inclined to check and trust online restaurant reviews and reputations before deciding where to dine. This concentration suggests that for these younger consumers, online reputation plays a vital role in influencing dining decisions, which could impact marketing strategies focused on digital reputation management for attracting this audience.

The gender distribution reveals a notable disparity, with 84.6% of respondents identifying as female and only 15.4% as male. This imbalance may indicate a higher level of engagement among female respondents in the study or suggest potential differences in dining habits and tendencies to check online reviews between genders. The predominance of female respondents implies that insights from this data may reflect behaviors and preferences that are more representative of female consumers, particularly regarding the influence of online restaurant reputation on their dining decisions. This trend suggests that marketing and reputation management strategies might need to account for a more substantial female consumer base, potentially tailoring efforts to address the preferences and behaviors observed in this demographic.

3.1 Discussion

The implications of online reputation management for restaurants offers insights into consumer expectations, preferences and loyalty dynamics in Katsina’s digital dining landscape.

Table 2: How frequently do you dine out

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	42	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Weekly	54	41.5	41.5	73.8
	Monthly	21	16.2	16.2	90.0
	Rarely	13	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	130	100.0	100.0	

The dining frequency data indicates that a substantial portion of respondents dine out regularly, with 32.3% dining daily and 41.5% dining weekly. This suggests that the majority of respondents maintain consistent dining habits, which may heighten their sensitivity to restaurant reputations. Given their regular engagement with dining establishments, these consumers are likely more responsive to online reviews and

reputational information, as it could influence their frequent dining choices. This finding implies that restaurant reputation management may have a more pronounced impact on consumer behavior for those with regular dining patterns.

Table 3: How often do you check online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	28	21.5	21.5	21.5
	Often	13	10.0	10.0	31.5
	Sometimes	54	41.5	41.5	73.1
	Rerelydo	14	10.8	10.8	83.8
	Never	21	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	130	100.0	100.0	

The frequency with which respondents check online sources reveals that a majority engage in online research to some extent, with 21.5% always and 41.5% sometimes checking online for information. This suggests that most respondents incorporate online research into their decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of online reputation as a factor in their choices. Such engagement implies that restaurant reputations presented online are likely to significantly influence consumer behavior, as these consumers actively seek and rely on digital information to guide their dining decisions. Consequently, maintaining a positive online presence may be crucial for restaurants aiming to attract and retain customers in this digitally connected audience.

Table 4: How often do you check online reviews before visiting a restaurant?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Disagree	14	10.8	10.8	21.5
	Undecided	14	10.8	10.8	32.3
	Agree	48	36.9	36.9	69.2
	Strongly agree	40	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	130	100.0	100.0	

The data shows that a considerable number of respondents rely on online reviews when deciding whether to visit a restaurant, with 36.9% agreeing and 30.8% strongly agreeing that they check reviews beforehand. This trend underscores the influential role that online reviews play in shaping consumer choices, as a majority of respondents appear to depend on these reviews as part of their decision-making process. The implication is that restaurants with positive online reviews are more likely to attract these informed consumers, while those with negative reviews may see reduced patronage. This reliance on reviews highlights the need for restaurants to actively manage their online reputation to appeal to consumers who prioritize peer feedback and quality assurance when choosing where to dine.

3.2 Correlation analysis

Table 5: Correlation analysis Table

		Do online reviews influence your decision to visit a restaurant?	How likely are you to recommend a restaurant with a good online reputation to others?	Do you trust online reviews when deciding on a restaurant?	Positive online reviews increase my confidence in choosing a restaurant.
Do online reviews influence your decision to visit a restaurant?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.248**	.013	.307**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004	.886	.000
	N	130	130	130	130
How likely are you to recommend a restaurant with a good online reputation to others?	Pearson Correlation	-.248**	1	.546**	-.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004		.000	.883
	N	130	130	130	130
Do you trust online reviews when deciding on a restaurant?	Pearson Correlation	.013	.546**	1	.319**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.886	.000		.000
	N	130	130	130	130
Positive online reviews increase my confidence in choosing a restaurant.	Pearson Correlation	.307**	-.013	.319**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.883	.000	
	N	130	130	130	130

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



Figure 1: Correlation analysis for online restaurant reputation

The correlation analysis provides understandings into the relationships among several factors related to online restaurant reviews and consumer behavior. A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.307, p = 0.000$) exists between the influence of online reviews on visiting decisions and the confidence that positive reviews instill when choosing a restaurant. This suggests that consumers who are influenced by online reviews are likely to feel more assured about their choices when those reviews are positive, reinforcing the importance of maintaining favorable online reputations for restaurants. However, a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.248, p = 0.004$) is observed between the decision to visit a restaurant based on reviews and the likelihood of recommending a restaurant with a good reputation to others, indicating that while

reviews may guide personal decisions, they don't always directly translate into recommendations for others.

Furthermore, the data reveals a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.546$, $p = 0.000$) between trust in online reviews and the likelihood of recommending a restaurant with a good online reputation. This implies that consumers who trust online reviews are also more likely to advocate for restaurants with positive feedback, highlighting the potential impact of trustworthy reviews on word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, trust in online reviews is moderately correlated with the confidence boost from positive reviews ($r = 0.319$, $p = 0.000$), emphasizing that trust is key in translating reviews into actionable influence. These correlations underscore that online reviews serve not only as a guide for individual choices but also as a driver for broader consumer advocacy, affirming the significant role of online reputation in influencing dining behavior and recommendations.

3.3 Analysis of Variances

Table 6: The Analysis of Variances table for restaurant reputation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
A restaurant's online reputation affects its customer patronage.	Between Groups	9.276	4	2.319	1.566	.188
	Within Groups	185.155	125	1.481		
	Total	194.431	129			
Positive reviews lead to higher customer loyalty.	Between Groups	95.131	4	23.783	17.398	.000
	Within Groups	170.877	125	1.367		
	Total	266.008	129			
Negative online reviews have a direct impact on a restaurant's sales.	Between Groups	35.268	4	8.817	10.759	.000
	Within Groups	102.432	125	.819		
	Total	137.700	129			
The overall performance of a restaurant is influenced by its online reputation.	Between Groups	55.146	4	13.787	13.387	.000
	Within Groups	128.731	125	1.030		
	Total	183.877	129			

4.4 Discussions of Findings

The ANOVA results provide a detailed view of how various aspects of a restaurant's online reputation impact customer patronage, loyalty, sales, and overall performance. For the first measure, the analysis indicates that the effect of online reputation on customer patronage is not statistically significant ($F = 1.566$, $p = .188$), as the p-value is above the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that while online reputation might influence customer patronage to some degree, it does not have a consistently strong impact across respondents. This finding may imply that while some consumers might consider reputation when choosing a restaurant, other factors—such as personal preferences, convenience, or pricing—might also play substantial roles in determining customer patronage.

In contrast, positive reviews show a statistically significant impact on customer loyalty ($F = 17.398$, $p = .000$), indicating that favorable reviews play a major role in fostering repeated patronage among customers. Similarly, the influence of negative reviews on restaurant sales is also statistically significant ($F = 10.759$, $p = .000$), suggesting that unfavorable feedback can substantially reduce customer willingness to purchase or dine at a restaurant, thus impacting sales performance. Lastly, the ANOVA reveals that a restaurant's overall performance is significantly affected by its online reputation ($F = 13.387$, $p = .000$), underscoring that reputation plays a critical role not just in individual customer loyalty or sales but in the holistic success of the business. These findings highlight the powerful effect of online

reviews on various facets of restaurant business performance, stressing the importance of maintaining a positive reputation to sustain customer loyalty, sales, and overall market success.

The findings from this study also indicate that online restaurant reputation significantly influences consumer behavior and business performance, underscoring the relevance of digital presence for restaurants. The demographic data reveal a young consumer base, primarily aged 18–25, which likely reflects higher digital engagement and reliance on online reviews. This is particularly significant as younger consumers tend to check online reviews frequently and place high importance on the online reputations of establishments. Furthermore, the gender distribution, with a strong female majority among respondents, may highlight a potential demographic that values digital feedback, given prior studies indicating that women are generally more likely to engage with online review platforms before making dining decisions. These demographic insights imply that restaurants can benefit from tailoring their online reputation strategies to appeal to younger, digitally-active consumers, potentially driving higher foot traffic through positive online engagement.

The correlation analysis strengthens the understanding of how various aspects of online reputation affect consumer behavior. Strong positive correlations were found between consumers' trust in online reviews and their likelihood to recommend a restaurant with a good online reputation. This implies that consumers who value online reviews not only trust the feedback but are also inclined to advocate for the restaurant if the reviews align with positive dining experiences. Another important correlation was found between online reviews' influence on consumers' decisions to visit a restaurant and the confidence those reviews instill. Positive reviews appear to create a sense of assurance, which encourages consumers to select one restaurant over another. These correlations reflect a consumer base that not only seeks validation but also shares positive experiences, thereby amplifying the restaurant's online visibility and reputation through word-of-mouth recommendations.

The ANOVA results provide additional depth by revealing statistically significant differences in consumer responses regarding the effects of online reputation on customer loyalty, sales, and overall business performance. Positive reviews were shown to have a considerable impact on customer loyalty and sales, highlighting that favorable digital feedback can directly influence a restaurant's success metrics. Conversely, negative reviews were associated with a drop in sales, emphasizing the potential risk that poor online feedback poses to business performance. The findings suggest that maintaining a positive online presence through reputation management is not only beneficial but essential for sustaining customer loyalty and driving sales. Together, the correlations and variance analyses present a compelling case for why restaurants must prioritize their digital reputation, as consumer trust in online feedback can have direct and measurable impacts on their business outcomes.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that online restaurant reputation significantly influences consumer behavior and business performance in Katsina State. Positive online reviews and a strong digital presence encourage customer loyalty, higher sales, and sustained patronage, while negative reviews can deter potential customers and impact profitability. As digital engagement increases among younger consumers, restaurants in the region must prioritize online reputation management to stay competitive. This study highlights that responding to customer reviews, maintaining service quality, and using data analytics to understand consumer preferences are essential strategies for enhancing digital reputation. The results indicate that a proactive approach to managing online feedback is beneficial not only for customer satisfaction but also for long-term business success.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

These recommendation were made to the restaurant owners and other stakeholders in other to improve the online system of the restaurant activities. It was recommend that Restaurants should actively engage with their customers online by responding to reviews, addressing concerns and thanking patrons for positive feedback. This engagement fosters trust and builds loyalty. They should also invest in digital tools that monitor online reviews and social media mentions. These tools can help businesses stay aware of their

online reputation and respond quickly to negative feedback. More also to reduce negative reviews, restaurants should focus on maintaining high service quality and consistency. Ensuring that food, ambiance and customer service meet or exceed customer expectations can help build a positive reputation and finally they should use data analytics to track customer preferences and trends based on online reviews. This data can help tailor services, menu offerings, and promotional strategies to better meet consumer expectations.

6.0 Research Contribution

This study contributes to the intersection of digital technology and the restaurant industry by offering how online reputation impacts both consumer behavior and business outcomes. It bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks on reputation management and real-world business performance metrics. Additionally, the research provides a foundation for future studies to explore the effects of online platforms in other service-oriented industries. The findings offer practical recommendations for restaurant owners and marketers seeking to capitalize on their online presence for sustained business success. The study also highlights the importance of continuous monitoring of digital reputation, providing a framework for integrating digital strategies into traditional business models.

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