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Assessment of Co-Joint Factors Influence on Guests' Choice of Fine Dining Restaurants in Kenya

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Abstract

There is limited data and studies that have assessed the co-joint influence of social media applications, social demographic, and individual factors on guests' choice of fine dining restaurants. Previous studies have shown increased use of social media applications by consumers and subsequently influenced decision-making. Thus, need for innovation to meet consumer expectations. A mixed-method approach was used to assess co-joint factors of influence on guests' choice of fine dining restaurants in Kenya. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from purposively selected guests. Data were subsequently analyzed and presented in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. Testing of the null hypothesis was also conducted. The calculated value of R-squared implies that the remaining variations or determinants in the choice of fine dining restaurants are attributed to factors other than the composite variable. Besides the significant influence of social media applications, there are other factors attributable to guests' selection process. This study contributes to the theory of consumer behaviour in the larger hospitality and tourism industry. The study further reveals new dimensions on the selection of restaurants' products and services. In this direction, managers and owners of restaurants need to embrace more technology in their businesses.

Keywords: consumer expectations, consumer behavior theory, innovation, decision-making process, composite variable

Background of the Study

Well-managed social media sites can create a virtual relationship with existing customers or convince a first-time guest to visit (Pantelidis, 2010). Previous studies on hotels' website quality and customer satisfaction (Faizan, 2016; Wang et al., 2015) have confirmed the influences of customers' perceived flow, influencing their satisfaction and purchase intention. A study that explored consumers' motivation for sharing restaurant dining experiences on social media among millennials in Johannesburg (Koufie & Kesa, 2020) confirmed a significant impact of Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication.

A content analysis of 2,471 customer comments using a preference structure model regarding meal experience in fine dining restaurants (Pantelidis, 2010) favourable comments about food, service, ambience, price, menu, and decor (in that order) when reflecting on their

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experiences. In terms of cuisine choice, a study by Marinkovic et al. (2015) on factors affecting choice and image of ethnic restaurants in Serbia showed that quality of food and price are the two most significant factors determining which restaurant to visit. On the other hand, interior decor ranked as the least important factor in consumers' intention to visit a restaurant. Based on the above discussions, a null hypothesis was proposed that social media applications, socio-demographic factors, and individual factors do not have a significant joint influence on the choice of fine dining restaurants by guests in Kenya.

Literature review

The restaurant industry

Restaurants are essential components that contribute to tourism economic activities in a country. (Natalia et al., 2018), besides jobs creation and improving Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To tourists, fine dining restaurants contribute to choosing a destination (Marinkovic et al., 2015) and enhancing the overall satisfaction of the guests in restaurants (Sparks et al., 2015). Different types of restaurants exist, including casual restaurants, family-style restaurants, fast food restaurants, cafés, fine dining restaurants, all catering for different clientele. Fine dining restaurants cater to upscale clientele and provide the highest quality of food, offering full service with high operating standards, high pricing levels, the most refined ambience, and atmosphere (Amelia & Gargs, 2016). Fine dining restaurants are defined as exceptional restaurants from regular restaurants in terms of foods, pricing, staff training, level of service, among others (Parpal, 2013). These restaurants also develop menus and offer a selection of food items to increase customer turnover. According to Kleynhans and Roberson (2015), this is crucial to customers who search for quality and value for their money. Modern fine dining restaurants offer cuisines and dining concepts with the desire to embrace technology. The use of technology has enabled fine dining restaurants to achieve the acclaimed virtues and creative ways of reaching out to potential customers and expanding their customer base.

In South Africa, fine dining restaurants have varying variables contributing to their selection. These variables include convenience, need to relax, repeat visits, business meetings, social occasions, quality food, good service, good ambience, quietness, and recommendations from other visitors (Mhlanga & Tichaawa, 2015). Shahzadi et al. (2018) cited other factors including food taste, quality of service, ambience, high-end pricing, and environmental cleanliness.

The restaurant industry is largely fragmented, forming different establishments types (Longart, 2015). These establishments are discussed later under different typologies. In Kenya, none of the previous studies has attempted to define the fine dining restaurants, or the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) categorized them. However, TripAdvisor, the World's largest online travel site and recognized by World Tourism Council (WWT), has attempted to classify fine dining restaurants across Kenya. In Europe, the Michelin Stared ratings are recognized in fine dining restaurants, while in the United States of America, the National Restaurant Association (NRA) provides research and industry trends. Hsu et al. (2018) assert that fine dining restaurants are more likely to attract hedonic customers who pay more attention to restaurant environments. According to these authors, factors such as surroundings, customer turnover, location, price, quality of food, quality of service, and type of food would influence the choice of a fine dining restaurant. However, new trends are shaping fine dining restaurants around the World (NRA, 2019). They include a competitive business environment, tight labour marketing affecting employment, increased consumers, and technology innovations. On the other hand, the traditional cafés, casual eateries, and fast-food restaurants offer very informal service, moderately priced menus, and a low-key atmosphere (NRA, 2019).

The National Restaurant Authority did a study (2019) that showed about 80% of consumers in the U.S. search for restaurants through mobile applications, while 75% of the population make decisions from their search. According to Jumia report (2017), over 66% of the populations that cut across between Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda actively use mobile phone technologies to communicate and search for services through social media applications. According to Longart (2015), restaurants have integrated social media applications for customers to write reviews and ratings and hence provide easy-to-use and accessible applications to share dining experiences. The interactive potential of social media applications enables the public to publish comments, opinions, and appraisals about destinations (Munar & Steen, 2014). These reviews and ratings affect consumers' behaviour intentions and decisions, influencing firms' performance (Song et al., 2015).

In a study by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) on social media applications and networking, consumers engage sites for information search to make informed decisions about their travels. Information can reach a large population (Akrima & Khemakhem 2012). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2014), the well-known social media applications are microblogs, social network sites, and content communities. These social media applications are collaborative online applications and technologies that enable participation, connectivity of user-generated content, sharing of information, and collaboration, amongst a community of users. Previous studies on social media reviews and ratings (Marinkovic et al., 2015; Sparks et al., 2013; Needles & Thompson, 2013) have shown a relationship between usage, quality improvement, and customer satisfaction. A study by Faizan (2016) revealed that the quality of firms' websites influences customers' perceived flow, satisfaction, and purchase intention. Consumer behaviour studies show how individual customers, groups, or organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants (Woodside, 2017). It is the actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the underlying motives for those actions.

In Turkey, restaurants were found to pay significant attention to TripAdvisor for various purposes (Ozygen & Kozak, 2015), while in South Africa, use of social media applications increased tremendously where Instagram was leading, followed by YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook in that hierarchy (World Wide Worx, 2016). According to Jumia Travel Guide (2016), Kenya had about 4.5 million users of Facebook, with the number expected to double by the year 2020. In their annual report (2017), Jumia Travel Guide concurred with the Communications Authority of Kenya on the increase of 112% of Kenyans using the internet by 2020, hence greater expectations from travellers on using technologies. A study by Nendo (2017) further eludes the increase in internet consumption in Kenya, at about 22 million users across different social media applications

The global market outlook on the restaurant industry is estimated to be over 3 trillion dollars, with the largest market being America, followed by Europe, Asia, and Africa in that order (NRA, 2019). However, restaurant trends differ on dining needs, consumer behaviour, and technology differ from country to country. In Australia, restaurants are essential to tourists' overall satisfaction with a destination (Sparks et al., 2015). Also, a study by Sparks et al. (2013) indicates that over 60 percent of respondents interviewed considered restaurants as necessary when selecting a holiday destination, spending between $20 to $50 per adult on dinner. Restaurants' characteristics also influence the consumers' choices (Leung, 2013). Among these characteristics is the menu offering various dishes, attractive decor, local food products, etc. According to Akbar and Alaudeen (2012), consumers primarily evaluate factors such as surroundings, customer turnover, location, price, quality of food, service, and type of food in choosing a restaurant. Confirming this, Kafel and Sikora (2013) found seven factors that guide the consumers to choose a restaurant. These factors include food quality in the top rank, cleanliness, service, value, menu variety, convenience, and atmosphere. Six key motivations

for eating out were listed (Sparks et al., 2015). Among them are holidaying, health, experience, and social reasons, while the reason for relaxation emerged as the most important for dining. Another factor identified was a gender difference in choosing to eat out while on holiday, where women were more likely to indulge in dining experiences than men (Fortis, 2015).

Different types of restaurants exist around the World (National Restaurant Association, 2019). Previous studies show that the decor of a restaurant, along with how guests are expected to dress, determines how casual or upscale an eatery appears. At the same time, table services versus counter services and the attentiveness of the servers are also indicators. The fine-dining restaurants are known for their high-end decor, formal dress, full table service, and attentive servers. In contrast, casual restaurants comprise a relaxed atmosphere, casual dress code, and full table service accompanied by either counter service or less formal servers.

Factors that guide the classification of restaurants (NRA, 2019) include pricing. Different restaurants use price variations as a marketing strategy to segment and penetrate the market. Secondly, there is food quality. Previous studies (Parpal, 2013; Longart. 2015) showed that quality food dictated food pricing, and therefore managers could make it to fix pricing. The food quality determines ingredients, source, and preparation processes. A restaurant can decide to use fresh, local, or organic ingredients in its operation. Alternatively, a restaurant can use a made-to-order preparation approach or a deliberate preparation process for large quantity production. Thirdly was the type of food on the menu. Menus can be from a specific region or feature innovations from the chef. In other restaurants, menus are based on specific types of food such as pizzerias and steakhouses or according to diets such as vegans or ketogenic diets. On special occasions, restaurants use highly aesthetic dishes with garnishes, use modest, simple food presentations or serve foods in disposable take-out items. Lastly is the branding of food products by restaurants. According to Kotler et al. (2014), branding gives meaning to a specific organization, company, product, or service to create or shape a brand in consumers' minds. Organizations use branding strategy to help people quickly identify and experience brands and choose the said product over the competitors by clarifying the differences.

Different categories of restaurant

Patrons to restaurants have a variety to select from for their meals or drinks. Although most restaurants exist within classified hotels in Kenya (Kamau, 2017), there are various restaurants. According to NRA (2019), over twenty different restaurants, all catering to different clientele. The fine-dining restaurants are different from the regular restaurants in terms of everything they offer (Parpal, 2013). The main characteristics of these restaurants are the formal dress code, acceptable dining etiquette, high-end décor, and a formal atmosphere. Workers in these restaurants are generally more attentive and follow certain etiquette for taking and serving meals. These restaurants offer exotic menus of interesting dishes accompanied by wine service regarding the foods available.

Another common type of restaurant is casual dining establishments. The ambience varies considerably based on these restaurants' brands and intended customer base. Additionally, casual dining restaurants have similar qualities: moderately priced menus, table service, a low-key atmosphere, and unique décor. The contemporary casual dining restaurants are typical walk-in restaurants nearly for everyone who can afford a decent meal. Thus, they are modern and trendy with a distinct brand, have eco-friendly protocols, serve unique healthy foods, and a trendy atmosphere that emphasizes visuals, worthy décor, and food.

Another type of Restaurant is a family-style restaurant. In these restaurants, people eat from one big plate. Food is served on large platters for parties to share, table service, guests, typically pass around the dishes and serve themselves.

Fast-casual restaurants are popular fast-food restaurants. They are not classified under the TRA but are licensed to operate. Fast-casual restaurants are more affordable than casual dining restaurants in terms of food pricing. However, similar characteristics exist between the two, such as quality of food, and prices are usually higher than fast food but lower than casual dining. These restaurants serve people looking for healthier quick bites other than fast food. Also, offer counter service, casual, contemporary environment, and décor. Other typical restaurants that exist in urban towns are fast-food outlets. These restaurants have over-the-counter services or drive-thru services. Fast food outlets are usually chain outfits, serving standardized meals made of processed food and having a casual ambience with foods served in disposable items such as plastic containers or paper food trays

Cafes outlets offer quick drinks such as coffee, chocolate, flavoured teas, sweets, baked cakes and biscuits for breakfast and lunch, having a casual and relaxed atmosphere. Cafes are popular among customers out for meetings or socializing for long hours. Similar to Cafes are the Food Trucks, and Concession Stands. These are outdoors catering outlets popularly found at sporting events, fairs, or on city streets where food is partially or fully pre-made. They offer convenient options to owners to purchase a small unit (food truck or stand) instead of an ample brick-and-mortar space. Both the Food Trucks and Concession Stands serve single menu items such as hot dogs, ice cream, sandwiches, and smoothies in terms of food sold.

Last in the restaurant categories are the pop-up restaurants which are common in Europe. These restaurants vary from a simple beer garden or a sit-down restaurant in an unconventional location running for a short period before closing down. In terms of their location, it varies from shipping containers or old unused buildings to outdoor spaces and rooftop gardens. Here, both creativity and contemporary concepts are essential at the service counter, food stand or food truck service, or complete table service.

The proliferation of fine dining restaurant concept

The concept of fine dining restaurants started in the 18th Century during the French Revolution (NRA, 2019). This concept involved chefs setting up a private dining area for the ruling class, with a la carte menus served in an ambient atmosphere. Guests were not required to sit at a standard table like taverns and roadside inns but instead at private tables held by reservations and thus fine dining. The concept of fine dining has drastically changed in the global market, where traditional fine dining was mainly associated with French cuisine.

Fine dining restaurants are one of the components that contribute to choosing a holiday destination for some tourists (Marinkovic et al., 2015), besides enhancing their overall satisfaction (Sparks et al., 2015). According to Mhlanga and Tichaawa (2015), formal dining restaurants in South Africa are the most convenient places to relax, host a celebration, make a business meeting, have a social occasion, experience quality food, and good service, good ambience, and quietness. Fine dining restaurants have gained popularity in their selection due to recommendations from previous visitors, reviews, and comments on the selection of restaurants.

In Kenya, social media applications are evident in marketing strategies among fast-food restaurants (Kiiru 2018), while celebrity chefs are using similar applications to showcase their skills (Koigi, 2018). This is crucial to restaurateurs in understanding the mediating factors on selection criteria, as this information can guide marketing strategies (Ryu et al., 2012; Kleynhans & Roberson, 2015). Trends in consumer behaviour in restaurants in the U.S. (NRA, 2019) show that over 72% of global travellers search for their restaurants using smartphones, over 45% visit these restaurants thrice a week, while over 80% of Millennials want to know more about the process and origins of what they are eating by searching for information through social media applications.

Types of social media applications

The increased use of social media applications (SMAs) has changed the way consumers communicate and socialize. Previous studies cite the role of social media applications as a new socialization agent that influences young adults' consumer behaviour (Leung, 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). Different authors have attempted to define social media applications. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2014), social media applications are a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of User-Generated Content (UGC).

The well-known types of SMAs are microblogs, social network sites, and content communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2014). These SMAs have become both social and corporate for effective communication. The benefits associated with these social applications include the ability to uncover industry trends in real-time, the ability to analyze business competition, better customer services through instant feedback, the ability to create accurate customer content, ability to position a business over the competitor, and the ability to appeal to young social-savvy customers. Among the disadvantages cited against the use of social media applications is lack of emotional connection between a business and its customers, decreased face-to-face communication skills, and the inability for the business to apportion revenues delivered from its usage (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Influence of SMAs on the choice of fine dining restaurants

Despite increased social media applications in service industries (Faizan, 2016), hospitality products and services customers have different encounters due to perishability. Studies about social media applications and users' decisions on fine dining restaurants elicit diverse views. This is due to fragmentation of the sector (ILO, 2010), which results in the inability to define it (Malbasa, 2018), and the changing customers' choices and preferences. For example, Yaris and Sehmus (2021) investigated the Impact of S.M. on consumers' selection of restaurants; four social media factors were used to measure and test the model. The study revealed three factors that influenced individuals' restaurant choices on the trip (more) and at home, including searching for services, social interactions, and products).

Another study (Jun-Justin et al., 2021) attempted to measure social media engagement across different social networking sites (SNSs) and promotional activities for the casual-dining restaurant industry. The study showed different social media engagement metrics across channels and promotional activities. Also in the study findings was a significant positive impact of SMAs on casual-dining Restaurants and performance. A quantitative study by Pattanacha, 2015 on the Impact of social media marketing and electronic Word of Mouth (WoM) on nuanced dining choice decisions among the respondents showed significant results. The study concluded that conversation on social media and sharing information were the most impactful factors. However, other components of relative positive value in fine dining choice decision-making included location, parking, and décor.

Similarly, Sergio et al. (2020) attempted to confirm if, in Europe, social media influences restaurant corporations' sales and revenues. The study demonstrated the positive effects of online reviews on revenues generated and a mixed relationship between both variables. A similar study establishing social media influences on customers' experiences in restaurants in South Africa (Mhlanga & Tichaawa, 2017) found a significant role S.M. such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in that order. A survey was conducted on purposively selected Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) within the hotels' sector in the Cape Metropole (Obiefula et al., 2017). The study sought to establish whether marketing strategies deployed on social media can enhance the growth of restaurants. The sampled SMMEs

revealed social media platforms and moderately effective marketing tools, with WhatsApp leading, followed by Facebook and Twitter. Among the findings in a case study to assess the impact of social media on restaurants businesses around the Oulu region in Nigeria, Manoj (2017) found that social media provides a cheap and accessible marketing platform that instantly reaches thousands of customers. Other related studies on social media applications and their influence include purchasing behaviour change among tourists in Morocco (Laajini, 2021) determinants of social media usage on perceived benefits among hotel guests in Zimbabwe (Mutsikiwa et al. 2021).

Due to the fragmentation of the hospitality industry (ILO, 2010), research on social media applications and their use in Kenya's fine dining restaurants is not well documented. For example, Wakaba (2011) attempted to assess how social media marketing was applied in small and medium hotels in Nairobi, Kenya. The study revealed minimal use of social media in hotel marking activities. A case study was used (Oyoo, 2016) to analyze the extent of the application of social media advertising on improving popular brands among fine dining restaurants in Nairobi County. The study findings were that social media advertisements increased fine dining restaurants and a channel for meeting customers. According to Nyanduko (2016), S.M. was significantly important to create brand awareness improve brand image, and brand loyalty among customers in three-star hotels in Nairobi County. A similar case study that sought to assess social media marketing on consumer brand loyalty among the Indian cuisine restaurants in Nairobi was done by Patel (2019). One of the findings in this study was that S.M. is necessary to create brand awareness and facilitate interaction through communication that subsequently creates positive brand value on users.

Theoretical models

The study borrows Technology Adaption Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1985). Three constructs explain the theory; perceived ease of use, usefulness, and attitude towards using a system or the technology. The theory presumes various factors that influence the consumer decision-making process. To underpin the research objectives, the TAM is used to assess how social media applications influence guests' choice of fine dining restaurants. Aligned to consumer behaviour is the premise that consumers undergo a process whenever they make a purchase, and it involves factors that influence their decision. These include individual factors such as attitudes, expectations, values, and needs.

Social demographic factors such as age, income, occupation, family lifecycle, family size, savings, and possession also influence the purchasing decision. Other factors are firms' financial performance, branding, location, and reputation. The Previous studies (Wamba et al., 2017) have applied TEM theory to understand customers' attitudes about and behaviour towards technology use and acceptance of online banking. It was also used in understanding the effects of restaurant satisfaction and knowledge sharing motivation on eWOM intentions (Yang, 2017).

The second theory in this study is the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The theory suggests that peoples' actual behaviour could be determined by considering prior their intention and attitude. In this study, social demographic factors predict the guests' behaviour in restaurants. The third theory premised in this study is the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) proposed by Rogers (1962). The theory focuses on understanding how, why and at what rate innovative ideas and technologies spread in a social system. An example, in this case, is the social media applications on how they have transformed all forms of communications in society. Enterprises incorporate social media technology in their operations and reach out to consumers in the business world. In this study, the researcher assumes that the type of information consumers have to make informed decisions often influences choices—

one of such influencers in the social media applications that affect their behaviour change and intentions. The researcher established factors that influence social media uptake and its relationship with restaurants' social media activities by studying these constructs. Also, guests' choice of fine dining restaurants and testing the null hypothesis.

Materials and methods

The objective of this study was to assess the influence of social media applications on guests' choice of fine dining restaurants in Kenya. A quantitative research approach was used to do the survey. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Key informants were the fine dining managers purposively selected from the study units. Ethical considerations were critically observed during the study period. In the use of SMAs, six (6) constructs (statements) were formulated, and respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the usage of SMA stated in the identified statements. A Five-point Likert scale was used, and Mean ratings (M), Standard Deviation (S.D.), Skewness (Sk), and the Kurtosis (K)

Study findings

Study findings on the use of SMAs

Below are responses as summarized and shown in Table 1.

Use of SMA	Mean	SD	Sk	K
I use SMA to search for dining restaurant	1.66	1.037	0.890	3.121
I use my phone to search for dining restaurant	2.06	1.097	0.206	.875
Social Media pop-ups prompt me to search for dining restaurant	2.07	1.159	0.082	.279
I always visit dining restaurants with active internet services	3.01	1.515	-.051	-1.512
I use my phone to make a restaurant booking	2.35	1.308	.734	-.683
I use my phone to pay bills, including restaurant bills	1.91	1.022	0.239	.960

Table 1: Use of SMAs

Table 1 gives statements regarding using social media applications to access various services in a restaurant. Since most of the mean ratings were less than 3 (*Neutral*), it implies that respondents generally agreed with the identified statements. It is worth noting that the least mean ratings were observed in using SMAs to search for dining restaurants (M = 1.66, SD = 1.037) and using a mobile phone to pay bills (M = 1.91, SD = 1.022). Based on the nature of the scale, a low mean rating implied that respondents strongly agreed with the statement in question. On the other hand, visiting dining restaurants with active internet services had the highest mean score (M = 3.01, SD = 1.515), indicating that the responses tended towards disagree side. In general, the mean ratings do not vary significantly, which is evidence that there is a relationship between usage of SMAs and choice of fine dining restaurants. Skewness coefficients show small values that range between 0 and 1. This range of skewness values indicates that responses on this question generally exhibited symmetric distribution. Symmetric distribution implies normal distribution, which is advisable for any regression modelling.

Choice of fine dining restaurant - determinants

In this section, the study assessed determinants of the choice of fine dining restaurants. Several factors were identified by the researcher and grouped into three categories: food and service-related factors, online-related factors, and restaurant features. A Five-point Likert scale of 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree was then used. The 325 respondents were requested to rate the extent to which the identified factors determine

the fine dining restaurant choice. The responses were summarized using Mean (M) ratings, Standard Deviation (S.D.) and Skewness (Sk) of each factor. Table 2 gives this summary.

Table 2: Choice of fine dining restaurant-determinants

	N	Mean	SD	Sk
Food and service related factors				
Food and drinks variety	325	1.12	.422	4.928
Food and drinks quality	325	1.09	.325	3.613
Price of food and drinks	325	1.41	.763	2.036
Value for money	325	1.19	.466	2.734
Speed of service	325	1.26	.521	2.591
Online/internet related factors				
Availability of internet services	325	2.94	1.473	-.027
Ease of obtaining internet password	325	2.94	1.447	-.047
Ease of keying Wi-Fi password	325	2.97	1.423	-.036
Ease to log into Wi-Fi access	325	2.92	1.436	-.003
Speed of Wi-Fi	325	2.86	1.440	.070
Mode of payment of bills	325	1.61	.795	1.653
Presence of online booking	325	2.08	1.142	.966
Presence of online payments	325	2.18	1.184	.956
Restaurant's features				
Lighting in the restaurant	325	1.66	.864	1.655
Comfort of furniture	325	1.36	.629	2.146
Type of clientele	325	1.52	.742	1.771
Operating hours	325	1.67	.796	1.333
Restaurants' atmosphere	325	1.14	.449	4.308
Restaurants' location	325	1.20	.522	3.253
Friendliness of waiting staff	325	1.13	.392	4.362
Restaurants' reputation	325	1.35	.625	1.858
Standard of restaurant	325	1.30	.566	1.993
Availability of meeting facilities	325	2.04	1.103	1.030
Guaranteed privacy	325	1.29	.644	2.834
Guaranteed security	325	1.22	.564	3.069
Guaranteed personalized services	325	1.23	.560	3.043
Ample parking space	325	1.25	.572	2.890
Cleanliness of the restaurant	325	1.15	.410	2.603
Visit company	325	1.58	.789	1.530

It can be seen from Table 2 that mean ratings in all the determinants were less than 3 (*Neutral*). This was an indication that respondents tended to agree that the determinants are vital in influencing the choice of fine dining restaurants. This was also evident in the minor deviations among the mean ratings in all factors. A similar trend of small margins was also observed among the standard deviations in all determinants. Also, only online-related factors had negative skewness coefficient in the three categories. A negative skewness coefficient, based on the nature of the Likert Scale, implied that the responses tended towards the Strongly Agree side more than any of the categories. This was evidence that respondents generally agreed that online or internet-related factors, including social media applications, are vital in influencing their choice of fine dining restaurants.

On food and service-related factors, pricing of food and drinks had the highest Mean rating of 1.41 (SD = 0.763), while the quality of food and drinks quality had the least mean rating of 1.09 (SD = 0.325). Among factors related to Online and Internet, ease of keying Wi-Fi password had the highest mean rating of 2.97 (SD = 1.473), while the mode of payment of bills had the lowest mean rating of 1.61 (SD = 0.795). The section that sought to assess restaurant features had sixteen (16) constructs. Availability of meeting facilities had the highest Mean rating of 2.04 (SD = 1.103), while the least rating was observed on the friendliness of waiting for staff (Mean = 1.13, SD = 0.392).

Data analysis

Regression analysis

In regression analysis, both direct and indirect effects models were examined. This study had four main variables, which were Social Media Applications (SMA), Socio-Demographic Factors (SDF), Individual Factors (IF) and choice of fine dining restaurant (D.R.). The independent variable was Social Media Applications, while Socio-Demographic Factors (SDF) and Individual Factors (IF) were moderating variables. The dependent variable was the choice of a fine dining restaurant. Therefore, the direct effects model was used to examine the direct influence of Social Media Applications on the choice of fine dining restaurants. However, obtaining these regression models was preceded by diagnostic tests to ascertain whether the collected data satisfied conditions for regression modelling. Three diagnostic tests that were conducted included normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity.

Testing of research hypotheses

Testing the combined effect of social media applications, socio-demographic factors, and individual factors involved obtaining a composite variable of the three variables and regressing the dependent variable on this composite variable. For simplicity, the composite variable was denoted as **X*,** and the corresponding null hypothesis was stated as

For this hypothesis, the regression model was expressed as follows:

$DR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X^* + \varepsilon$

Where;

D.R. = Choice of Fine Dining Restaurant (Dependent variable)

X*= Composite Variable of SMA, SDF and IF

β_0 = Regression constant

β_1 = Regression coefficient for Composite Variable

ε = Error term

The summary for the joint effects model was as shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that for the combined effects model, the R-squared value was observed to be 0.3842, equivalent to 38.42%, with a corresponding F-statistic of 23.4603. The value R^2 implies that the composite variable explains only 38.42% of the total variations in fine dining restaurant choice. This explained variation was significant since the corresponding p-value = 0.01 (< 0.05). The value of R-squared (38.42%) implies that the remaining 61.58% of the variations or determinants in the choice of fine dining restaurant is attributed to factors other than the composite variable. The associated standard error of R-squared was found to be 1.9344.

The ANOVA results show an F-value of 23.4603 and a p-value of 0.010, less than 0.05. The p-value implied that the regression model of the fine dining restaurant choice on the composite variable correctly fits the collected data. Since the obtained model correctly fits the data, the choice of fine dining restaurants can be expressed as a function of the composite variable. This is, however, possible using the corresponding regression coefficients. The regression coefficients section shows that regression coefficients for the constant term and composite variables are 0.061 (S.E. = 0.701) and 6.631 (S.E. = 2.133), respectively. Using the corresponding p-values, the constant term was not significant at 5% since p-value = 0.091, while that of the composite variable was 0.015, indicating a significant positive effect. The p-value (= 0.015) implied that the social media applications, socio-demographic factors and individual factors, as a composite variable, significantly influence the decision of an individual to choose a particular fine dining restaurant. Consequently, the combined effects model was expressed as follows:

$$DR = 0.061 + 6.631\ X^*$$

Where X* is the composite variable of social media applications, socio-demographic and individual factors. Based on the significance of the influence of the composite variable, the null hypothesis **H_{04}** was rejected at 5% and concluded that social media applications, socio-demographic factors, and individual factors have a significant joint influence on the choice of a fine dining restaurant was made.

Table 3: Joint effect regression model

Model Summary					
R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error	F Change	Sig.
.6198	.3842	.3298	1.9344	23.463	.010

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F-statistic	Sig.
Regression	21.165	1	21.865	23.4603	.010
Residual	284.127	305	.932		
Total	305.992	306			

Regression Coefficients				
	Beta	Std. Error	t-statistics	Sig.
(Constant)	.061	.701	.087	.091
Composite Variable	6.631	2.133.	3.109	.015

Dependent Variable: Dining destination choice
Predictors: (Constant), Composite Variable of SMA, SDF and IF

Discussions

There is a shift in consumers' expectations in the hospitality and tourism industry. Also, the way consumers communicate and socialize. For example, previous studies (Leung, 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014) cited the role of social media applications as a new socialization agent that influences young adults' consumer behaviour. Notably, the changing needs among consumers of fine dining restaurants are revealed in this study. Previously, consumers were keen on provisions of restaurants such as the location, pricing, quality of food, quality of service, and type of food (Hsu et al.,2018), convenient places to relax and socialize (Mhlanga & Tichaawa 2015) ambience, and atmosphere (Amelia & Gargs, 2016). The presence of social media applications has resulted in a new paradigm shift due to its role in the decision-making process. For example, potential customers were found to significantly rely on reviews, comments and ratings from the previous guest to make an informed decision about a product or a service (Inversini & Buhalis 2014), purchasing intention and behaviour change (Koufie & Kesa, 2020), similarly to those on travel to a destination (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014) or those sharing information about their experiences a destination (Tussyadiah & Zach, 2013). Through social media sites, travellers can convey information about a particular destination, whether good or bad, which can affect the success or failure of that tourism destination.

Conclusion

From the preceding discussions, the evolution of SMAs continues to impact how organizations do their businesses. The frequency and levels of interaction affect both business growth and customer satisfaction. Consumers of the hospitality and tourism industry are aggressively searching for information for day-to-day consumption. While restaurants play a pivotal role in guests' experience at a destination, extant information exists in the decision-making process. Conversely, fine dining restaurants are fast adopting these applications to reach out to potential customers. This is a departure from the traditional forms of communications such as print

media and word of mouth. Therefore, a need to understand trends in behaviour change. The Impact of SMAs on guests' choice of restaurants for dining purposes does not confine to a specific geographical region but cuts across to all consumers of service industries.

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