CONTRIBUTORY ROLE OF RESTAURANT SERVICES IN THE GROWTH OF NIGERIA'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract
The contributory role of restaurant services in the growth of the hospitality industry is a vital area of focus, particularly in Nigeria's evolving service economy. This study investigates how restaurant services impact the broader hospitality sector, with emphasis on their influence on tourism, employment, local economies, and guest satisfaction. Using a desk review research approach, secondary data were drawn from scholarly articles, online journals, industry reports, and case studies in Nigeria and comparable contexts, including evidence from global best practices, the study explores the interaction between restaurant operations and other hospitality segments such as hotels and event centers. The research also analyzes how innovation, sustainability, and customer preferences drive service improvement in restaurants. Findings reveal that restaurant services significantly enhance customer retention, promote cultural tourism, and contribute to revenue generation and employment. The study concludes that advancements in restaurant service delivery are closely linked to the competitiveness and growth of the Nigerian hospitality industry.

***Key words:** Restaurants, Hospitality Industry, Fine Dining, Food And Beverage, Customer Satisfaction.*

Introduction

Restaurant service is an essential aspect of the hospitality industry, focusing on providing customers with a pleasant dining experience. It encompasses all the interactions between the customer and the restaurant staff, from greeting guests to the final check-out. The main objective is to create a positive atmosphere, ensuring guests feel comfortable, valued, and satisfied with their food and service (Hwang *et al*., 2023). The hospitality industry is a major contributor to global economies, generating significant revenue through services like lodging, dining, and entertainment. Its growth is heavily influenced by factors such as technological advancements, consumer trends, and cultural shifts. Today, the industry also focuses on incorporating sustainable practices, personalized guest services, and leveraging digital tools to enhance customer

experiences (Morrison *et al.*, 2020). The hospitality industry is a diverse and expansive sector focused on providing services to people away from home. It includes a variety of services, such as accommodation, food and beverage, travel, entertainment, and event management. This industry is essential to global economies, creating millions of jobs and generating substantial revenue worldwide. The hospitality industry is influenced by changing consumer behaviors, technological advances, and global trends, continuously evolving to meet the demands of its customers (Brotherton *et al*.,2020). The restaurant is approximately an 800-billion-dollar industry. Given it's dominance, the students of the hospitality management should possess a working understanding of the food service segment of the hospitality industry.

The restaurant is an important section in the hotel operations, food (restaurant)service systems are characterized by labor intensiveness especially in the area of production, hence skilled and unskilled labor is needed. Since food is perishable, it requires being handled properly before, during and after production. Menus changes on a daily basis, thus, production changes daily. These characteristics create challenges in scheduling employees and production, difficulty in staffing, and high labor and food cost. Although some research has been made on the role of restaurant service in hotel operations, yet not enough research has been made on the essentiality of restaurant service to hospitality industry.

Objectives

1. Examine the contribution of restaurant services to the growth of Nigeria's hospitality industry.
2. Analyze the relationship between restaurant operations and other key sectors within the hospitality industry.
3. Assess the impact of sustainability, innovation, and consumer trends on restaurant services in Nigeria.
4. Explore career opportunities and capital development within restaurant services as a driver of hospitality sector growth.

Literature Review

The Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry provides services for people who are away from home regardless of whether it is for a long or a short period of time. These services can vary according to the specific needs of both the person away from home and the organization operating those services. The hospitality industry is important to the development of many parts of the world (Falabi and Folorunso, 2020). There is no doubting that hospitality industry is the livewire of tourism at all levels. The United Nations World

Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021), confirms that between 70% and 75% of international tourists‟ expenditure goes to hospitality services on annual basis. This confirms the strategic importance of the sector to tourism, and global economy. The number of internationally operated hotels world over are numerous, some of these franchises are in Nigeria as well. However, the number is expected to keep growing. Nigeria has so few internationally branded hotels due to the perception of the country as a high - risk destination for investments, especially in hotel businesses, which are capital-intensive and require long-term for the investors to recoup their money (Ukpokolo and Folorunso, 2019).In the restaurant industry, services can be broadly categorized into two types: commercial and non-commercial. Understanding these segments helps businesses cater effectively to their target audience. Restaurants are also differentiated within these categories based on various factors like service quality, customer demographics, pricing strategies, and more.

Methodology

This study adopts a desk review research approach to explore the contributory role of restaurant services to the hospitality industry through secondary data collection method. This forms the basis of gathering relevant information. Existing research articles, books, reports, and case studies were reviewed to understand the theoretical background and previous findings regarding the role of restaurant services in the hospitality industry. Reports and statistics from hospitality associations, government agencies, and restaurant industry bodies are analyzed to assess the economic contribution of restaurants to the broader hospitality sector. Analysis of online reviews, blogs, and news articles related to restaurant services and their impact on the hospitality industry is used to gather recent trends and growth.

Analysis of Empirical Review

Interrelationship between Restaurants and Other Sectors of the Hospitality Industry

The interrelationship between restaurants and other sectors of the hospitality industry in Nigeria is crucial for both operational success and economic development. Several authors have contributed valuable research exploring how restaurants collaborate with hotels, tourism, event management, and local supply chains. Below are studies and findings that illustrate these connections:

Integration with Hotels and Lodging:

In Olumide (2022) study, he explored how restaurants within hotels contribute to guest satisfaction and retention arguing that restaurants offering authentic Nigerian cuisines, along with international dishes, help hotels differentiate themselves in the competitive Nigerian hospitality market. This integration also contributes to the overall profitability

of hotels, as well as enhanced guest experiences. Major hotels such as the Eko Hotel & Suites have incorporated restaurants that focus on both local Nigerian dishes and international cuisine, offering guests a variety of dining options that enhance their stay.

Collaboration with Tourism

In Calabar, restaurants collaborate with the Calabar Carnival, offering tourists authentic Cross River state dishes. This synergy enhances the tourist experience, making food a key attraction in the region. Restaurants in tourist hubs such as Lagos, Abuja, and Calabar are key contributors to tourism, often working with local tourism boards to promote food festivals and local culinary tours. (Chinonso, 2021)

Economic Impact and Job Creation

In his work on the economic contributions of hospitality, David (2020), focused on how restaurants, hotels, and tourism drive employment and economic growth in Nigeria. Akinyemi underscores that the successful collaboration between restaurants, hotels, and tourism boosts local economies, especially in major cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Restaurants in Lagos have seen significant growth due to the influx of both domestic and international tourists, which has led to job creation in the city's hospitality sector. Additionally, local food suppliers, from farms to markets, benefit from the increased demand for fresh produce.

Supply Chain Collaboration:

Abimbola (2022), investigates the interrelationships between restaurants and local food supply chains in Nigeria in her study, "Supply Chain Dynamics in the Nigerian Hospitality Sector." Ogunlade explores how restaurants in Nigeria collaborate with local farmers, food processors, and suppliers to source ingredients. She points out that restaurants benefit from the growing demand for fresh, local produce, while simultaneously supporting the local agricultural economy. Pinnacles resources center restaurants in Kwara state, often source fresh vegetables from the farm in the resort center. This not only supports local agriculture but also reduces costs and improves the quality of food served.

Role in Event Management

Restaurants such as Terra Kulture often partner with event organizers to cater for cultural events, weddings, and corporate meetings. This collaboration allows restaurants to showcase their culinary expertise while supporting the hospitality industry's event management needs.

Professional Career Options within the Restaurant Industry

Johnson (2022) defined executive chef, as the "head chef," the leader of the kitchen and is responsible for overseeing food preparation, managing kitchen staff, and ensuring the quality and presentation of all dishes. An executive chef must have a deep understanding of culinary techniques, leadership, and management skills. They are also tasked with menu creation, inventory control, and maintaining health and safety standards. A career as an executive chef requires extensive experience in culinary arts, typically achieved through years of training and working in various kitchen positions. Then we have the Sous Chef. Miller and Roberts (2023) affirmed the sous chef as second-in-command in the kitchen and plays a critical role in ensuring kitchen operations run smoothly. Sous chefs supervise line cooks, assist with inventory management, and help the executive chef with menu planning and food preparation. This position often serves as a stepping stone for aspiring executive chefs, providing valuable leadership experience and kitchen management skills. Sous chefs must have both culinary expertise and the ability to manage a team effectively under pressure. It should be noted that Restaurant Manager is also one of the career opportunity in the restaurant industry.

Smith (2022) addressed the restaurant managers as the overseer of the day-to-day operations of a restaurant, including managing staff, ensuring customer satisfaction, and handling financial tasks such as budgeting and inventory management. They must be adept at multitasking, problem-solving, and managing both front- and back-of-house operations. A successful restaurant manager often has a background in hospitality management, along with excellent communication and organizational skills. This role involves ensuring smooth service delivery and addressing customer complaints when necessary. Adams and Wilson (2023) added the Food and Beverage Director. The food and beverage director is responsible for overseeing the restaurant's beverage and food service operations, ensuring both quality and profitability. This role typically involves managing budgets, setting prices, developing menus, and supervising both kitchen and front-of-house operations. Food and beverage directors must have a comprehensive understanding of food trends, customer preferences, and the ability to handle complex operational and financial tasks. They often work closely with chefs, managers, and suppliers to ensure that service is efficient and meets customer expectations

Another career opportunity in the restaurant industry is Bartender. Williams (2023) affirmed that Bartenders play a crucial role in the customer experience at many restaurants, particularly those with a full-service bar. They are responsible for preparing and serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, managing inventory, and providing excellent customer service. A good bartender must possess strong interpersonal skills, an understanding of mixology, and the ability to work efficiently in a fast-paced environment. Career progression can lead to roles such as bar manager or beverage

director. Keller (2023) explained a sommelier as a wine expert specializing in wine pairing, selection, and service. Sommeliers are responsible for curating wine lists, managing wine inventories, and educating both staff and customers about wine choices. A sommelier must have in-depth knowledge of various wines, regions, and production methods. Many sommeliers also conduct wine tastings and recommend wine pairings to elevate the dining experience. Certification from wine organizations, such as the Court of Master Sommeliers, is often required to advance in this field.

Host/Hostess Hosts or hostesses are the first point of contact for customers entering a restaurant. Their duties include greeting guests, managing reservations, and coordinating seating arrangements to ensure the dining room runs smoothly. In addition to excellent customer service skills, hosts/hostesses need to be well-organized and capable of handling multiple tasks at once. This role is often an entry-level position but can lead to higher positions such as restaurant manager with experience (Taylor, 2022). Roberts and Lee (2023) talked about the Marketing Manager. A marketing manager in the restaurant industry is responsible for promoting the restaurant's brand, driving sales, and increasing customer engagement through various marketing channels. This can include digital marketing, traditional advertising, social media management, and public relations efforts. Marketing managers must understand the latest trends in consumer behavior, the restaurant industry, and how to effectively reach target audiences. This role is often ideal for individuals with a background in marketing, communication, or hospitality. Restaurant Accountant Restaurant accountants are responsible for managing the financial operations of a restaurant, including bookkeeping, payroll, tax filing, and budgeting. They work closely with restaurant managers and owners to ensure that the business remains profitable and financially healthy. Restaurant accountants must be knowledgeable about the specific financial challenges of the foodservice industry, such as managing food cost percentages and labor costs (Brown, 2022).

Consumer Trends and Sustainability Practices in Shaping the Future of Restaurant Services within the Broader Hospitality Sector

Over the past twenty years, the hospitality industry has primarily targeted Baby Boomers, but Millennials and Gen Z are now emerging as key demographics in the hospitality sector. This shift has created service delivery challenges for hospitality industry. Notably, Gen Z is poised to dominate the future market, with a clearer sense of their needs and aspirations compared to Millennials. (Kumar, 2020). This generation, heavily influenced by technology, craves simplicity and speed in goods and services. They demand cutting-edge tech and uncomplicated experiences. Hospitality sectors are developing specialized services to cater to future generations. Millennials prioritize experiences over material possessions, so restaurants must adapt sales and marketing strategies to attract them and Gen Z customers, who comprise a larger population

segment. (Dimitriou, 2015). Additionally, Gen Z, born after 1996, accounts for around 32% of the global population. They've grown up with technology and exhibit multitasking abilities, often using multiple screens simultaneously. To cater to these generations, restaurants must reassess their approaches. (Kumar, 2020).

Sustainable Practices Shaping the Future of Restaurant Services within the Boarder Hospitality Sector

Sourcing Local Ingredients; restaurants can reduce their carbon footprint by sourcing ingredients from local farmers and suppliers, which also supports the local economy (Abdou *et al*., 2023). This practice can also involve building partnerships with local farmers to promote seasonal and sustainable food options. Sustainable Menu Design; restaurants can design menus that promote sustainable food practices, such as offering seasonal and locally sourced ingredients, and providing information about food production and consumption to educate customers (Abdou *et al*., 2023). Energy Efficiency; implementing energy-efficient equipment and practices, such as using LED lighting and optimizing HVAC systems, can reduce energy consumption and lower greenhouse gas emissions (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Water Conservation; implementing water-saving measures, such as low-flow faucets and efficient dishwashing systems, can conserve water and reduce waste (EPA, 2020). Composting and Recycling; implementing composting programs for food waste and recycling programs for paper, plastic, and glass can reduce waste and minimize environmental impact (US EPA, 2019). Customer Education; restaurants can educate customers about sustainable food practices through menu descriptions, signage, and staff training, promoting awareness and encouraging sustainable behaviors (Abdou *et al*., 2023).

Discussion

Based on the secondary data collected from industry reports, academic journals, and other relevant sources, the following findings highlight the contributory role of restaurant services in the growth of Nigeria's hospitality industry:

Enhancing Customer Experience: Restaurant service is a fundamental pillar of the hospitality industry, as it directly contributes to creating a memorable and positive customer experience. Exceptional service in a restaurant involves attentive staff, personalized attention, and high-quality food, all of which can elevate the overall dining experience. This positive experience encourages repeat visits, customer loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations, which are critical for the success of restaurants and the broader hospitality sector. Moreover, high standards of service in restaurants often set the tone for customer expectations in other hospitality services, such as hotels and resorts (Smith, 2022).

Economic Impact: The restaurant industry significantly contributes to the economic growth of the hospitality sector. Restaurants create jobs, stimulate local economies, and support other industries such as agriculture, transportation, and marketing. Quality restaurant service ensures customer satisfaction, which translates into more business and increased sales. Additionally, well-run establishments contribute to the broader hospitality ecosystem by encouraging tourism, especially in destination areas where dining experiences are a key attraction for visitors (Johnson and Miller, 2023).

Promoting Culinary Tourism: Restaurant service plays a key role in promoting culinary tourism, where food and dining experiences become major attractions for tourists. A restaurant that offers excellent service and distinctive local cuisine can become a destination in itself, driving tourism to a region. The hospitality industry benefits from such culinary tourism, as restaurants often serve as gateways to local culture and traditions. As more people travel to experience unique food offerings, restaurants contribute significantly to the growth of tourism and regional development (Adams and Wilson, 2022).

Facilitating Social Interaction: Restaurants serve as social spaces where people gather to connect, celebrate, and enjoy meals together. Through efficient and professional service, restaurants facilitate positive social interactions, which enhance community engagement and strengthen bonds. This social aspect is crucial for the hospitality industry, as it creates a welcoming atmosphere that invites repeat customers and fosters long-term relationships. The emotional connection that customers feel with a restaurant due to exceptional service can also extend to other areas of the hospitality sector, encouraging guests to explore nearby attractions or accommodations (Williams, 2023).

Boosting Brand Reputation: In the hospitality industry, a restaurant's reputation is key to its success, and exceptional service is a major driver of this reputation. Restaurants that consistently provide outstanding service not only build a loyal customer base but also enhance the reputation of the broader hospitality industry in which they operate. Positive reviews, whether in person or online, can influence potential customers, making service quality a key factor in the reputation management strategy for restaurants and other related establishments, such as hotels and resorts (Roberts, 2022).

Supporting Sustainability Initiatives: In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on sustainability in the hospitality sector, and restaurant service plays a pivotal role in this trend. Many restaurants are adopting eco-friendly practices such as reducing food waste, sourcing locally, and offering plant-based menu options. These sustainable efforts not only attract environmentally conscious customers but also contribute to the hospitality industry's broader goal of minimizing its ecological footprint. Restaurants

that prioritize sustainability through their service practices set an example for other hospitality businesses to follow, creating a more responsible industry overall (Brown and Lee, 2023).

Training and Development of Skilled Workforce: Restaurant service is an essential part of the hospitality industry's workforce development. By offering training and career advancement opportunities, restaurants contribute to developing a skilled workforce that benefits not only the restaurant itself but the wider hospitality sector. Service staff, including waiters, chefs, and managers, often acquire transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, and customer service, which are highly valued across the entire hospitality industry. As a result, restaurant service contributes to building a strong talent pool that supports growth and innovation across the sector (Taylor, 2023).

Influencing Food Trends Restaurant service often helps to shape food trends that have a ripple effect throughout the broader hospitality industry. As customer preferences evolve, restaurants play a significant role in introducing and popularizing new culinary concepts. For example, the increasing demand for plant-based diets and locally sourced ingredients has gained traction in restaurants, which then influences food offerings in hotels, resorts, and other hospitality venues. This trendsetting role is essential for keeping the hospitality sector fresh and responsive to changing consumer tastes (Keller, 2022).

Conclusion

The restaurant industry is a cornerstone of the hospitality sector, contributing to the economy, customer satisfaction, and cultural exchange. By implementing these recommendations, restaurants can enhance their role within the broader hospitality industry, improve service quality, increase sustainability, and ensure long-term success. These strategies not only benefit the restaurants themselves but also contribute to the overall growth and evolution of the hospitality sector, making it more competitive and responsive to the needs of modern consumers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions surrounding the contributory role of restaurant services in the growth of Nigeria's hospitality industry, the following recommendations can be made for restaurants, industry stakeholders, and policymakers to maximize the positive impact and foster further growth in the sector:

i. Restaurants ought to work closely with neighborhood tourism boards, hotels, and attractions to make coordinates eating encounters that advance the goal as a entirety. This may incorporate joint promoting campaigns, uncommon

bargains, or packages that combine dining with other nearby encounters, special attention should be paid to food trends like plant-based options, local and organic foods, and unique cultural dining experiences. Prioritize sustainability by adopting energy-efficient practices, reducing food waste, supporting local suppliers, and embracing eco-friendly packaging. Moreover, restaurants should promote these initiatives as part of their brand identity to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

ii. Restaurants should invest in digital technologies that improve both operational efficiency and customer experience, such as online reservations, mobile ordering, contactless payments, and personalized customer service tools. Additionally, restaurant apps and social media platforms should be leveraged to engage with customers and promote special events or offers.

iii. Policymakers and government bodies should provide incentives for restaurants that implement sustainable practices or contribute to the local economy by supporting community-based agriculture, hiring local talent, and promoting cultural heritage. Given the increasing consumer interest in health and wellness, restaurants should consider offering menus that cater to dietary preferences such as gluten-free, low-calorie, or plant-based options.

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