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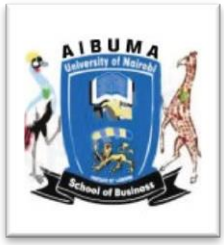


# ONLINE FOOD ORDERING AMONG FOOD OUTLETS IN NAIROBI

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## ABSTRACT

*Internet is the prototype of the global information infrastructure. Firms are using the Internet primarily for sales and service by advertising and providing customers with relevant information about a product or service. This paper describes the emerging implications of Internet technology as an evolving medium that offers restaurants limitless opportunities for e-commerce and for creating lasting relationships with customers. It dampens the bargaining power of channels by providing companies with new and more direct avenues to customers .The Internet provides an efficient means to order products. Online ordering being one of the e-commerce initiatives has emerged as an alternative avenue for food outlets to grow their sales. It offers more opportunities for interactive and personalised marketing as well as ease, speed and precision for the consumer. Food-outlets are able to offer the service through their own websites, multi-restaurant sites, mobile applications, and text ordering. Studies have shown that online food ordering can result in an increase in revenue, average check value, volume of sales, frequency of sales, order accuracy, productivity, improved convenience and customer relationship management. On line food ordering is new in Kenya. Few studies have been done in Kenya to determine the extent and distribution of online ordering by food outlets, and preference for distribution channels. From a population of 408 middle to upscale food outlets in Nairobi, this study sought answers to these questions. The results show that 23.7% of the outlets currently offer online ordering. The offerings were found to be independent of the restaurant type, but dependent on the type of cuisine offered. The characterization provided by this study lays the ground work for future work on the impact adoption has had on business performance.*

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## Introduction

Before adopting a particular technological system, a restaurant operator must assess potential benefits to customers and to the restaurant and compare these benefits to the cost of the system. Websites are used to accomplish a variety of marketing goals such as to promote brands, display a menu, place orders and replicate a visit to a restaurant (Liddle, 2001). Unlike the offline environment, the online environment offers more opportunities for interactive and personalized marketing (Wind and Rangaswamy, 2001). Today the Internet is the prototype of the global information infrastructure. Firms are using the Internet primarily for sales and service by advertising and providing customers with relevant information about a product or service. Cobanoglu (2002) describes the emerging implications of Internet technology as an evolving medium that offers restaurants limitless opportunities for e-commerce initiatives and for creating lasting relationships with customers. A study conducted by Mozeik, et al., (2009) in the United states of America indicated that most of the respondents had used the Internet at some time in their lives. However, interestingly, nearly 39% of the respondents had used a global positioning system (GPS) to find restaurant information, but only 24% had gone online to make a table reservation, which was less than the respondents who used a Personal digital assistant ( PDA) with Internet access.

Internet technology provides better opportunities for companies to establish distinctive strategic positions than previous generations of information technology. Gaining such competitive advantage requires building on the proven principles of effective strategy. Many of the companies that succeed use the internet as a complement to traditional ways of competing not those that set their internet initiatives apart from their established operations. Some providers have paid portals to distribute their content (Porter, 2001).

The internet can improve a company's relationships with its vendors, suppliers internal operations, customer relations, as well offer the prospect of reaching an expanding user base. It can lower communication costs by eliminating obstacles created by geography, time zones, and location. Further, the Internet makes it possible for businesses to serve as market makers helping buyers and sellers to locate one another, negotiate terms of trade and execute secure transactions (Porter, 2001).

The understanding of e-services has progressed along with the evolution of technological capabilities. E-services are defined as “interactive services that are delivered on the Internet using advanced telecommunications, information, and multimedia technologies” (Boyer, Hallowell and Roth, 2002 p. 175). In a restaurant context, consumers can find assorted restaurant e-services, such as menus, maps, directions, order online for take away services, make table reservations, among other web communications. Large portion of guests want to find a restaurant and get directions on how to access it online. If a restaurant does not have a web site, it loses out on potential business (Layton, 2006; Panitz, 2000).

## Research Problem

Firms are using the Internet primarily for sales and service by advertising and providing customers with relevant information about a product or service. Internet technology provides better opportunities for companies to establish distinctive strategic positions than previous generations of information technology. Online ordering being one of the e-commerce initiatives has emerged as an alternative avenue for food outlets that

have take-away service to grow their sales. It offers more opportunities for interactive and personalised marketing as well as ease, speed and precision for the consumer. Gaining such competitive advantage requires building on the proven principles of effective strategy.

Studies done in the United States have shown that online food ordering can result in reduced difficulty in purchasing, wider geographical market, prepaid orders, acquisition of knowledge of customers behaviour to provide more detailed targeted offerings, improved access, and transactional and service convenience. It also provides restaurant operators with key customer information that can be useful for developing promotion strategies. No similar studies of online food ordering have been done in Kenya. This study will fill that research gap by determining the extent food outlets have embraced online food ordering in Nairobi County.

**Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

The general objective of this study was to determine the current state of online ordering among middle to upscale food-outlets in Nairobi. The specific objectives were:

i. To determine the extent the food outlets in Nairobi have embraced online ordering systems
ii. To establish if different food-outlet types, or those offering a particular cuisine are more likely to offer online ordering systems than others.

The second research objective formed the basis of the following two research hypotheses:

*i.* $H_1$: Adoption of online ordering systems by food-outlets in Nairobi is dependent of the type of outlet.
*ii.* $H_2$: Adoption of online ordering systems by food-outlets in Nairobi is dependent of the cuisine offered by the outlet.

**Literature Review**

Kenyans and tourists currently choose from over 70,000 restaurants, cafes, and coffee houses to buy prepared foods and drinks. While the preponderance of Kenyan restaurants serve Kenyan staple foods, consumers can experience Indian, Italian, French, Chinese, Ethiopian, Thai, Japanese, U.S. style food and other cuisines in all major metropolitan areas ( Fas, 2011). Most offices in Nairobi are fast paced leaving little or no time to step outside for a meal. Many of the food outlets have embraced use of technology to increase optimization of operations and provide better products and services to customers. Some of the online platforms being used by the food outlets in Kenya are Eatout, Yum Deliveries Limited, Hellofoods and Foodpanda GmbH.

Hellofoods were founded in November 2012 and have revolutionized how Kenya eats by providing food delivery services to customers across Nairobi and recently in Mombasa. The company has also developed mobile shopping applications from which customers can shop to keep up with the changing trends and technologies. The platform which has a listing of more than 129 food outlets in Nairobi has noticed a shift to group orders where 2-10 employees of a company can make an order under one account to save on delivery fees. (CIO, 2016). Eat out is another online platform that has listed 2005 restaurants of which 804 offers taken away services. It was launched in 2010 and has established partnerships with Google, Visa, Twitter, Safaricom and Viber to provide comprehensive source of information to customers for anything related to food and drink. Yum deliveries limited is also a similar platform that provides online ordering of menus from customers favourite restaurants and are delivered to their location.

**Extent of Use of Online Ordering and Distribution Channels by Food Outlets in Nairobi.**

Online food ordering is growing in popularity among both consumers and restaurants. It has been associated with increased revenue, improved capacity management, improved productivity, improved transactional marketing and customer relationship management (Kimes and Laqué, 2011). Consumers are embracing online ordering because of its ease, speed and precision (Divon, Kimes, Verma, 2009). In a survey conducted by (Lang 2006) in the United States of America on casual and fine dining restaurants, 38 %of the restaurants take food orders online. In the United States, Weissenberger (2000) reported that online order volume for restaurants was increasing by 20 % each month. Some pizza franchisees reported that the average online order was higher than the typical phone order (Liddle and Corbin, 2000). Hollenkamp (2002) indicated that the average check increase was 15 to 20 %% higher for online orders compared with phone orders and represented the highest medium of all order options. Online ordering was most prevalent in the fast-casual at 37.5 % casual at 29.2 %, and quick service at 26.9 % of the segments.

There were no significant differences in online usage between respondents from chain restaurants and those from independent restaurants. Respondents from pizza restaurants were the most frequent users of online ordering at 46.6 % followed by respondents from sandwich food outlets at 37.9 % (Kimes and Laque, 2011) An online survey conducted on 372 respondents who were known to own, operate, or manage restaurants indicated that majority of respondents had ordering capabilities by phone at 88.7%, walk-in at 93.3%. About a quarter at 22.9 % took orders through their own website, 6.7 % through a multi-restaurant site, 3.3 % from mobile apps, 1.8 % by fax, and 1.4 % through Facebook. Overall, 26.9 % of respondents offered some sort of online ordering option (Kimes, 2011). The Internet provides an impulsive shopping channel (Phau and Lo, 2004). Customers can easily search the competitive providers that match their expectation (Singh, 2002), besides receiving input from peers through interactive media such as blogs, Face book and Twitter) in making purchase decisions (Herring et al., 2005; Bernoff and Li, 2008). The internet provides an efficient means to order products. It dampens the bargaining power of channels by providing companies with new and more direct avenues to customers.

It provides buyers with easier access to information about products and suppliers thus boosting buyer bargaining power and mitigates the need for established sales force or access to existing channels, reducing barriers to entry. (Porter, 2001). In the United States, most restaurants have a Face book presence but few offers Face book ordering. Exceptions include, Pizza Hut, which began Face book ordering in 2008, others are Jimmy John's Gourmet Sandwiches and California Pizza Kitchen. Face book users can also like particular menu item, and their friends can click into the restaurant's online ordering system if they want to order the liked item. (Liddle, 2010b). According to Kimes and Laqué, 2011, online food ordering was growing although the users placed 38 % of their food orders in the restaurant's website or mobile app. It is self-paced, faster and easier than ordering by phone because the customer does not feel rushed (Coomes, 2005). Some of the other approaches used by respondents who offer online ordering include outside vendor who develop their systems. Of these respondents, about 60 % managed their online site, while the remaining 40 % used an outside vendor to manage their online ordering. Developing a proprietary system can be expensive in terms of development costs, but would

offer a modest cost per order once the system is established (Kimes and Laque, 2011). Even if a restaurant establishes its own site, it may also want to appear on a multi-restaurant site.

Kimes and Laqué (2011) indicated that the main reason for online ordering in the United States of America was convenience at 4.54 %, followed by speed at 4.33 %, order accuracy at 4.32 %, ease of use at 4.26 % and credit card acceptance at 4.14 %. The major factor that inhibited those who had not ordered via an online channel was desire for interaction although technology anxiety was also an area of concern. Results of other studies conducted in the United States exhibit technology anxiety related to operations. Moreover, extensive studies focusing on the perceptions of emotions and usage of new technology demonstrate that people harbour both favourable and unfavourable views about technology-based products (Matthing, et al., 2006)

***Benefits of Online Food Ordering***

Online ordering generates incremental revenue by increasing order frequency, a higher average check through up selling, increasing order volume and prepaid orders. Making the restaurant more accessible to customers through online ordering will attract more customers and result in higher revenue. More than 59 % of restaurants using online ordering have recognized an increase in sales (Lang, 2006). Restaurants using online ordering reported more frequent orders and increases in group and catering orders due to the ease of placing an order. The simple addition of new distribution channels has a high probability of attracting customers. There was also increase in prepaid orders with customers paying upfront with a credit or debit card which minimizes the chance of a person fail to pay.

Electronic ordering routines provide restaurant operators with key customer information that can be useful for developing promotion strategies. Making information available, reducing the difficulty of purchasing, marketing and distribution allowing buyers and sellers to find and transact business with one another more easily also makes it difficult for companies to capture those benefits as profits. Internet allows a company to accumulate knowledge of customers buying behaviour in order to provide more detailed offerings and better service. This includes targeted promotions designed to build off-peak demand, specials for certain customer segments, and couponing strategies. With electronic ordering, customer's data are stored automatically on who the customers are, how to contact them, what they like to order, how much they usually spend and when they like to order. (Porter, 2001). Perceived convenience of a self-service system also leads to an increase in both adoption and satisfaction (Meuter et al., 2000). The definition of convenience is related to access convenience which is achieved by making it easier for a customer to place a food order and make reservation. Transaction convenience is achieved by reducing customers waiting time. Service convenience is related to customers desire to conserve their time and effort. An increase in convenience is associated with an increase in satisfaction (Berry et al., 2002).

The Internet reduces the importance of location. It widens the geographical market form local to regional and national (Porter, 2001). Preordering of food gives customers more control over their time by allowing them to select their food before pick up. Online ordering through an additional distribution channel i.e. website makes it easier for customers to order food at their convenience. These systems need to be tightly integrated with the point-of-service (POS) system so that the order is ready at the specified time (Webb 2006). Technology can increase service by

reducing the order-taking time through the use of handheld devices, advancing shortening payment time and cutting turnaround time. Faster service must be managed carefully so that customers do not feel that they are being rushed (Noone and Kimes 2005; Noone et al. 2007).

## Potential Disadvantages of online Ordering

Production peaks may overwhelm the kitchen to the detriment of food quality and customer satisfaction. Although electronic ordering systems can offer incentives for off-peak or advance ordering, restaurants still cannot control when electronic orders can come in. If electronic orders pile on top of a normally busy time for the restaurant, the kitchen may not be able to keep up with the increased demand (Coomes, 2010). When a restaurant is listed on a third-party ordering site, it is possible that customers may view the restaurant as a commodity since there a number of restaurants to choose from.

## Research Methodology

### *Study Population*

The study population consisted of middle to upscale food outlets in Nairobi. The online website *Eatout Kenya* was used. It lists food outlets in Nairobi, Mombasa, Diani, Malindi and Kisumu. The website also provides details for each food outlet on the time of cuisine, services offered, location as well as ordering methods. It therefore provided a convenient detailed source of data. At the time of review in May 2016, the site had a listing of 2012 food-outlets, of which 1,533 were in Nairobi. Of these 667 offered take-a-way service. However, a large proportion represented multiple outlets of a chain or franchise. Considering a chain as a single organisation, the final number of food-outlets of 404 and formed the study population.

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected from the entire study population, and therefore there was no sampling done. An online survey was prepared to assist in data collection. The instrument was divided into three parts. Part I sought information on the food-outlet's location, name, if offer deliver service, type of outlet and cuisine. Four food outlets type were defined: Fast Food, Casual, Fine Dining and Bakery. For ease of analysis, cuisine was divided into eighteen categories as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Cuisine definitions used**

- American (incl. Burger, Mexican)
- Bakery and Patisserie
- Bar-B-Que
- Caribbean
- Coffee House
- Eastern Africa excluding Kenyan (incl. Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali)
- European (incl. Continental, French, German, Greek, Irish, Portuguese, Italian, Mediterranean, Spanish, Tapas, Turkish)
- Far Eastern (incl. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Sushi, Thai)
- Kenyan (incl. Swahili)
- Middle Eastern (incl. Lebanese)
- North African (incl. Egyptian, Moroccan)
- Pizza
- South East Asian (incl. Afghan, Indian)
- Steakhouse
- Subs/Sandwiches
- West African (incl. Nigerian)
- Multi-cuisine
- Not applicable – where the food served does not apply to any specific cuisine

Part II of the instrument sought data on online ordering channels. This included through their own website or mobile application, as well payment options. Finally, Part II collected information on use of multi-restaurant online ordering sites.

*Data Analysis*

The data collected is categorical, and therefore the Chi-square test was used to test the hypotheses, i.e. is used to test the null hypotheses that whether a restaurant has adopted online ordering or not is independent of the type of cuisine and of the type of restaurant. The Chi-square test only provides the probability of independence and not any relationship between them. For example, how much more likely are restaurants with a particular cuisine more likely to have adopted online ordering than another. For those comparisons the odds ratio was used. The odd measures the frequency of probability of one outcome relative to another. The odds ratio is then the comparison between the odds of a pair of outcomes one variable to a pair of categories of another.

## Results

*Demographics of Sampled Restaurants*

The general demographics of the restaurants are presented in Figures 1 and 2 that display the distribution by type and by cuisine, respectively. Single outlet establishments, as expected are the majority at 78%, with franchises the fewest at 2.5%. Multi-cuisine outlets form the majority, representing 22.6% of the sample population, European at 10%. It is worth noting that 18.3% of the outlets do not fit within any specific cuisine.

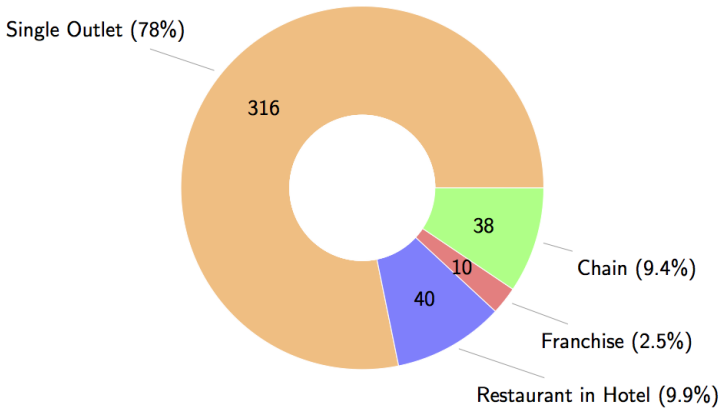


**Figure 1: Distribution of Food Outlets by Type**

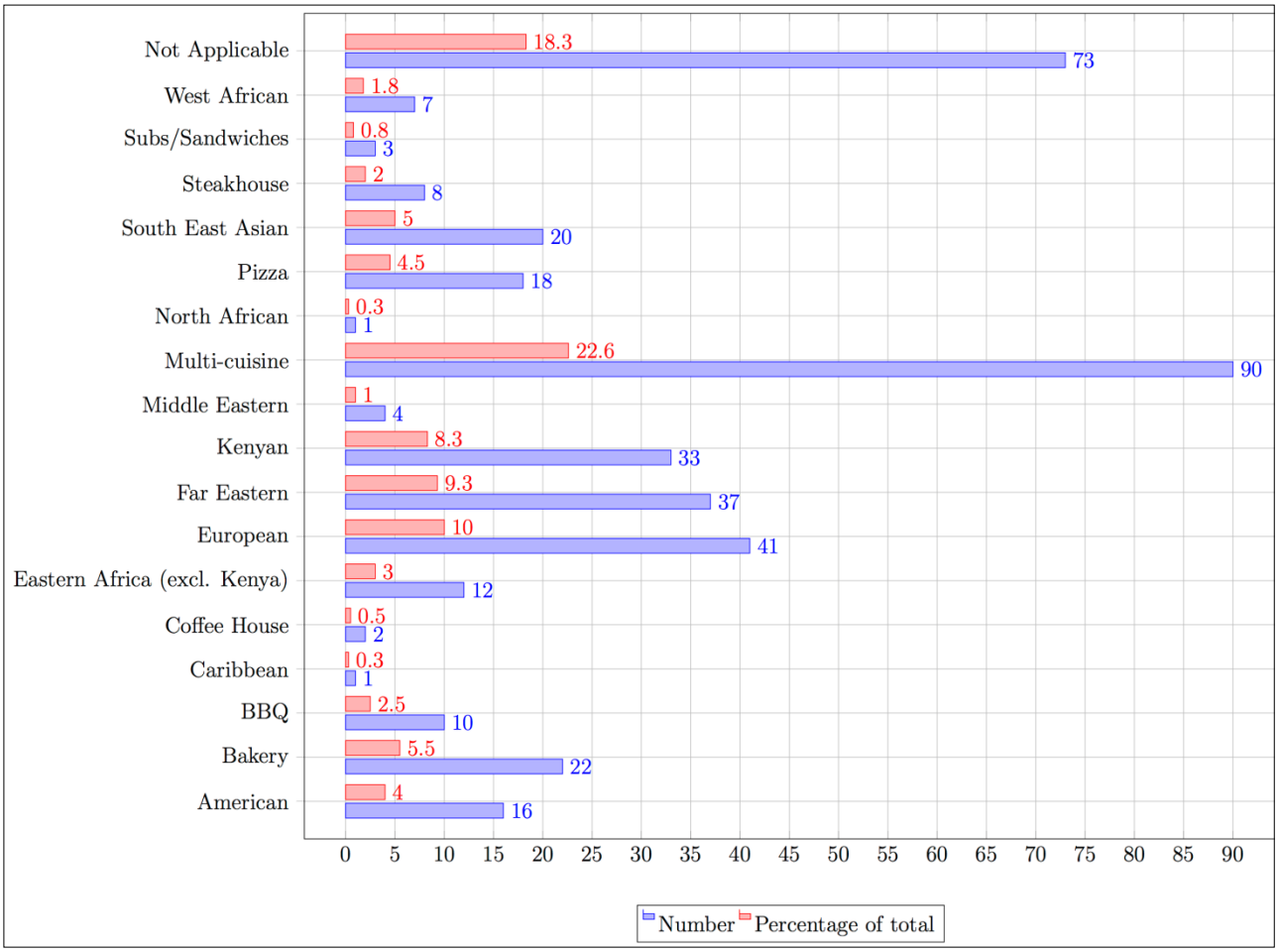


**Figure 2: Distribution of Food Outlets by Cuisine**

Of the 404 outlets in the population sample, 126 (31.1%) had websites, but only 16 (4%) provided ability to make orders through their sites. In addition, 79 (19.6%) used a third-party site to process online orders. In total 96 (23.7%) outlets gave the customer the option for online ordering either directly though their own site or through a third-party site. Other ordering channels included 87 (21.5%) outlets who accepted phone orders, and 5 (1.2%) who had a dedicated mobile application from which orders could be made. The extent of use of online ordering categorised by food-outlet cuisine is presented in Figure 3. The figure displays the absolute number of outlets as well as the percent of outlets within each cuisine with online ordering. Middle-eastern cuisine outlets have the highest percentage use of online ordering at 75% (3 out of 4), followed by Bakery and Patisserie at 64% (14 out of 22).

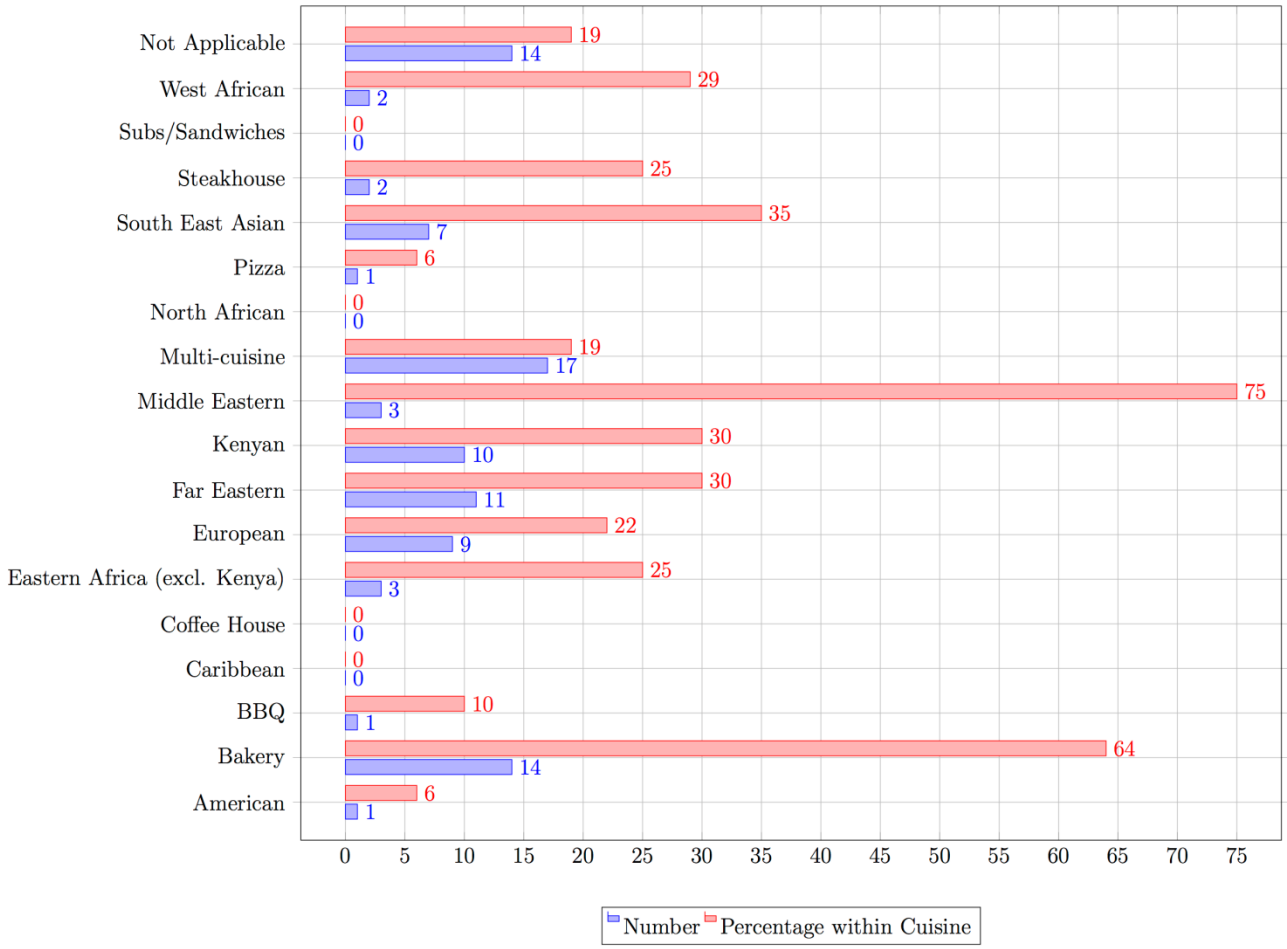


**Figure 2: Distribution of Online Ordering Availability by Cuisine**

*Hypothesis Testing*

Two hypotheses were tested using Chi-square. For the first hypothesis, *$H_1$: Adoption of online ordering systems by food-outlets in Nairobi is dependent of the type of outlet*, the number of degrees of freedom was 3, yielding a Chi-square value of 1.63 and p=0.347. Hypothesis 1 is therefore not supported.

The association between the different restaurant outlets types vis-a-vis their likelihood to have an online ordering system is presented as odds and odds ratios in Table 2. From the table, Single Outlets followed by Restaurants in Hotel have the highest likelihood of having an online ordering system with odds of 0.345 and 0.25, respectively. The rows within the tables, provide the odds ratio between the row and the column cuisines, for example comparing Single Outlet (Row 1) with Restaurants in Hotel (Column 2) shows that Single Outlets are *more* likely to have online ordering than Restaurants in Hotels with an odds ratio of 1.37. A similar comparison is provided for all the pair combinations in Table 2. These comparisons demonstrate the *extent of independence* on provision of online food ordering by food outlet type.

For the second hypothesis, *$H_2$: Adoption of online ordering systems by food-outlets in Nairobi is dependent of the cuisine offered by the outlet*, the number of degrees of freedom were 17, yielding a Chi-square value of 4.75 and a probability that the online ordering systems are dependent of cuisine at p=0.0016. In other words, adoption on online ordering systems *is dependent* on the type of cuisine offered. Hypothesis 2 is therefore supported.

The association between the different cuisine outlets vis-a-vis their likelihood to have an online ordering system is presented as odds and odds ratios in Table 3. From the results, Middle-Eastern and Bakery outlets have the highest likelihood of having an online ordering system with odds of 3.0 and 1.75, respectively. Comparing the two, Bakery (Row 2) with Middle Eastern Cuisine (Column 8) reveals that bakery outlets are less likely to have online ordering than Middle Eastern food outlets with an odds ratio of 0.58. A similar comparison is provided for all the pair combinations in Table 3. These comparisons further demonstrate the *extent of dependence* on provision of online food ordering by food outlet cuisine.

**Table 2: The Odds and Odds Ratio of the Food Outlets Offering Online Ordering by Type**

| | | | ODDS RATIO | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ODDS | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | **Single Outlet** | 0.345 | 1.37 | 3.1 | 1.83 |
| 2 | **Restaurant in Hotel** | 0.250 | | 2.25 | 1.33 |
| 3 | **Franchise** | 0.111 | | | 0.59 |
| 4 | **Chain** | 0.188 | | | |

**Table 3: The Odds and Odds Ratio of the Food Outlets Offering Online Ordering by Cuisine**

| | | | ODDS RATIO | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ODDS | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 1 | **American** | 0.07 | 0.04 | 0.60 | 0.20 | 0.24 | 0.16 | 0.15 | 0.02 | 0.29 | 1.13 | 0.12 | 0.20 | 0.17 | 0.28 |
| 2 | **Bakery** | 1.75 | | 15.75 | 5.25 | 6.22 | 4.14 | 4.03 | 0.58 | 7.51 | 29.75 | 3.25 | 5.25 | 4.38 | 7.38 |
| 3 | **BBQ** | 0.11 | | | 0.33 | 0.40 | 0.26 | 0.26 | 0.04 | 0.48 | 1.89 | 0.21 | 0.33 | 0.28 | 0.47 |
| 4 | **Eastern African ( Ex. Kenya)** | 0.33 | | | | 1.19 | 0.79 | 0.77 | 0.11 | 1.43 | 5.67 | 0.62 | 1.00 | 0.83 | 1.40 |
| 5 | **European** | 0.28 | | | | | 0.66 | 0.65 | 0.09 | 1.21 | 4.78 | 0.52 | 0.84 | 0.70 | 1.19 |
| 6 | **Far Eastern** | 0.42 | | | | | | 0.97 | 0.14 | 1.82 | 7.19 | 0.79 | 1.27 | 1.06 | 1.78 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7** | **Kenyan** | 0.43 | | | | | | | 0.14 | 1.87 | 7.39 | 0.81 | 1.30 | 1.09 | 1.83 |
| **8** | **Middle Eastern** | 3.00 | | | | | | | | 12.88 | 51.00 | 5.57 | 9.00 | 7.50 | 12.64 |
| **9** | **Multi-Cuisine** | 0.23 | | | | | | | | | 3.96 | 0.43 | 0.70 | 0.58 | 0.98 |
| **10** | **Pizza** | 0.06 | | | | | | | | | | 0.11 | 0.18 | 0.15 | 0.25 |
| **11** | **South East Asian** | 0.54 | | | | | | | | | | | 1.62 | 1.35 | 2.27 |
| **12** | **Steakhouse** | 0.33 | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.83 | 1.40 |
| **13** | **West African** | 0.40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.69 |
| **14** | **Not Applicable** | 0.24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## Discussion of Research Findings

Our results on the number of food outlets that have a website presence support the embracement of internet and technology in conducting business. Websites are used by companies to inform customers of the products and services offered and other corporate information. It provides visibility and awareness in the market place which in turn helps enhance the company image and reputation. The Internet reduces the importance of location and widens the geographical market form local to regional and national. It dampens the bargaining power of channels by providing companies with new and more direct avenues to customers (Porter, 2001).

It is interesting to note that very few food outlets provided ability to make online orders through their websites nor had a dedicated mobile application from which orders could be made. This may be due to the costs involved in the design and development of software, applications hardware expenses and maintenance costs. Majority of the food outlets provided their online ordering option through a third-party site. The results are similar to those presented by Kimes and Laque (2011) who found out that about 40 % used an outside vendor to manage their online ordering and 3.3 % from mobile apps. They also indicated that developing a proprietary system can be expensive in terms of development costs.

The findings from this study also suggest that adoption of online ordering was dependent on cuisine and not the type of outlet. These findings are similar to those presented Kimes and Laque (2011) who found that pizza restaurants were the most frequent users of online ordering followed by respondents from sandwich, Mexican and Asian restaurants and that there were no significant differences in online usage between respondents from chain restaurants and those from independent restaurants.

## Conclusions

There is little adoption of online ordering by food outlets in Nairobi although quite a number of them had websites. It was also noted that online ordering was dependant on the type of cuisine followed by bakery and patisserie and not dependant on the type of food outlet. Food outlets however had the likelihood of having an online ordering system. Having an online ordering system would enable food outlets

to benefit from providing customers with convenience which increases customer satisfaction, acquisition of more customers due to ease of placing an order, storage of customers data on who they are, how to contact them, what and when they order and how much they spend. This information could be used to develop promotional strategies among many other benefits. The additional benefits of lowering operational costs such as labour and distribution channels combined offers great potential for the food service industry if the online ordering system is adopted.

Further studies need to be conducted to determine customer perceptions on the use of online ordering systems provided by the food outlets and the impact on performance for the food outlet operators who have adopted it. It would be worth to know why food outlets that had websites had not adopted an online ordering system.

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