



## EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PERFORMANCE OF BAR & RESTAURANTS DURING THE CRISIS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract:

The recent Covid-19 crisis has wreaked havoc in the performance of businesses in the whole world. The most hit is the hospitality industry, especially the bar & restaurant businesses, which are considered high human density areas. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to examine the survival strategies influencing the performance of bar & restaurant businesses in Nairobi County, Kenya, in the face of a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. The outcome of this study was useful in countering the negative effects of future crises in Nairobi County as well as the rest of the nation. The study was based on diffusion of innovation theory and business resilience theory. The specific objectives of the study were to investigate the extent of strategic management adoption, assess the extent of technology/innovation adoption, ascertain the influence of diversification, and examine the influence of social media networking on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses in the face of crisis. The population under study was a total of 6,383 licensed bar & restaurant businesses in Nairobi County. The project adopted a survey research design and simple random sampling technique to select a sample that was representative of the whole population. The study targeted 100 respondents from a sample of 100 bar & restaurants within Nairobi County. The survey used both questionnaires and observation as the main methods of data collection. The researcher then analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression models and used textual explanation, and charts to present the results appropriately. The study also sought to examine the influence of social media on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses during the crisis in Nairobi County. It noted

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that the p-value of the social media adoption stood at 0.131 indicating that the social media adoption did not have a statistically significant influence on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses. The study thus found that social media adoption as a variable did not have a statistically significant influence on the performance of bar & businesses.

**Keywords:** influence of social media, performance of bar & restaurants, Covid-19 crisis

## 1. Introduction

The pandemic has caused irreversible damage to most industries since then. Many of the bar & restaurant businesses closed down and the few that remained downsized or underperformed characterized by reduced profitability, not being able to honor staff salaries, not being able to honor supplier payments, not being able to comply with regulations and not being able to consistently offer services to the public and clients. The bar and nightclub businesses had to suffer more because of the social closeness witnessed by the bar and club goers and due to the fact that they are associated with leisure activities. The businesses suffered since most people engage in drinking and socializing after office hours. Activity hours for bar & restaurant businesses start after office hours, which coincide with the time the curfew starts, effectively shutting the liquor and food outlets out of business. That explains why the government exerted more pressure on social gatherings including political rallies, religious gatherings and the transport industry.

The liquor industry like any other industry is a vibrant industry that cannot be ignored. The industry offers both indirect and direct employment to a big percentage of the Kenyan population starting from the wheat farms, which form the main raw material used for manufacturing alcoholic drinks, to waiters, who are the main sales and service people to the end consumers. For that reason, like any other business, the liquor joints are also bound to be affected by any crisis affecting the livelihood of the population. According to Business Daily (2019), the leading Kenyan beer manufacturer EABL paid a whopping Kshs 64billion to the exchequer in 2018.

The underperformance of the bar & restaurant businesses brought about by the pandemic necessitated this study. The study identified the bar & restaurant businesses that survived the pandemic and examined the survival strategies they adopted to remain afloat in the market despite the disruption encountered. This provided insight to current and future businesses on the best strategies they can employ to survive the economic downturn.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Bar & restaurant businesses in Nairobi were not well prepared for a disruptive crisis like the one presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The sector was worst affected by the

pandemic due to the restrictions on social distancing, the sale of alcohol and imposed a curfew during the pandemic. Many of the bar & restaurant businesses closed down and the few that remained downsized or underperformed were characterized by reduced profitability, not being able to honor staff salaries, not being able to honor supplier payments, not being able to comply with regulations and not being able to consistently offer services to the public and clients. The bar & restaurant businesses like any other business contribute to the economy and development of a nation. It was believed that the bar & restaurant businesses were not well prepared to tackle the disruptions normally caused by the crisis. This was because of the belief that these types of businesses operated in a somehow ad hoc manner and as such did not practice strategic management in their operations. It is believed that if they practiced strategic management, and adopted better business strategies then they would be able to absorb the disruptions caused by disruptive crisis, including the current Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has negatively affected the bar & restaurant businesses across the country and a number of them closed down since they were not able to withstand the pandemic. This study was carried out to examine the survival strategies, which were used by the establishments that survived the pandemic and how they influenced the performance of the bar & restaurant businesses.

Studies have come up with solutions to be adopted by businesses to maintain sustainable competitive advantage. A few studies have also been done by scholars on strategies adopted by businesses in times of crisis. The scholars are Am (2020), Lau (2020), Rodrigues Anton (2020), and Hoang et al. (2021). No verifiable research has been done on survival strategies influencing the performance of bar & restaurant businesses during the disruptive crisis" in favor of the alcoholic drinks industry. This was because the industry was often ignored by management consultants in strategic management despite the fact that the alcoholic industry contributed so much to the exchequer. *"In 2018 September, the leading Kenyan beer manufacturer EABL paid a whopping Kshs 64billion to the exchequer"* (Business Daily, 17th September 2019). Another reason was that in times of crisis the government only came to the rescue of industries providing basic commodities, since liquor products were viewed as luxuries by most households. Also, in as much as the study was determined to save this important industry through any possible strategies, previous research showed otherwise. In the eyes of the public, the morality index of drinking joints was very low and there was little sympathy from the administrative authorities (Freeman, 2002). This research outcome has given a lifeline to this neglected industry, which provided livelihoods to most families in the country. (WHO, 2020) in its 14th April 2020 update, indicated that the Covid-19 scourge led to societal and economic disruption. This study sought to reduce the negative effects of such disruption by examining the survival strategies which can offer good performance to the bar & restaurant businesses during the crisis. It majorly sought to document strategies or tactics that worked for bar & restaurant businesses in Nairobi County, Kenya during the crisis, especially the recent Covid-19 pandemic period.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

To examine the influence of social media on the performance of bar & restaurants during crisis in Nairobi County.

### **4. Research Questions**

How has social media adoption influenced the performance of bar & restaurant businesses during the crisis in Nairobi County?

### **5. Review of Empirical Literature**

Social networking is a way of communication which makes businesses create and interact with customers and share information in real-time through social media. Social media will help businesses know what the market is saying about their products. Using social media, companies can engage prospects and customers in real-time to determine their tastes and preferences and use this feedback to design products and services which suit the needs of the market. Businesses can also use social media to gain a competitive advantage, especially during the current crisis where physical touch is restricted.

A study by Timilsina (2017) established that social media impacts positively on restaurant businesses. The study showed that social media provide a cheaper and easier platform for small businesses like restaurants to pursue competitive advantage. It indicated that sharing food and ambience of the premises on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are keys to attracting and retaining a customer. Directly engaging customers on social media also make them feel some sense of belonging and therefore retain them. However, the same study also revealed that negative social media reviews can also affect business performance and hence survival. However, the positives outweigh the negatives of adopting social media in business.

A recent theoretical study by Hwang, Eves, & Stienmetz (2021) also revealed that social reviews of a particular restaurant play a crucial role in influencing consumer choice for the first visit. During the visit the client will again use social media to share their experiences in real-time, thereby indirectly marketing to the concerned restaurant. After visiting a given restaurant the customers will again use social media to publicize his/her reviews about the services received thereby promoting the business in a real-time unchoreographed way. During this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, this can be a very effective way as it conforms to the social distancing and other disease containment measures.

Fernández-Miguélez et al. (2020) also established that online presence, responsive management and a good dining experience, encourage clients to express opinions about the business. The favorable reviews would attract new clients, thereby improving corporate performance. Ignoring the social media reviews would impact negatively on any restaurant as some of them indicate that the client is satisfied and would influence

the reputation of the business and therefore better financial performance of the establishment. The impact of social media on business performance can therefore not be downplayed as it is a lesser costly way of accomplishing activities which would otherwise take a much lengthy approach to be done conventionally.

## 6. Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey design, which is a descriptive research design where the characteristics of the population to be observed are first described then a representative sample is taken for the study. This study sought to examine the strategies used by local bar and restaurant businesses to survive the disruptive crisis in Nairobi County, Kenya. Nairobi County is made up of 17 sub-counties with bar & restaurants spread across it. The target populations were bar & restaurant businesses operating within the boundary of Nairobi County. The data from Nairobi County Government Information Systems indicate that there are 6,383 licensed bar & restaurant businesses (Nairobi County Government, 2021). The study considered dive bar, commonly known as neighborhood bar & restaurants or “locals”. The researcher used simple random sampling. Through random sampling, the researcher identified 110 licensed bar & restaurant businesses within Nairobi County to participate in the survey as follows:

**Table 1: Sample Size**

No	Sub County	Population	Sample Size		Sample percentage of population
			For actual study	For pilot study	
1	Dagoretti North	318	5		1.6%
2	Dagoretti South	382	6		1.6%
3	Embakasi Central	446	7		1.6%
4	Embakasi East	321	5		1.6%
5	Embakasi South	192	3		1.6%
6	Embakasi North	383	6		1.6%
7	Embakasi West	766	12		1.6%
8	Kamukunji	254	4		1.6%
9	Kasarani	190	3		1.6%
10	Kibra	193	3		1.6%
11	Langata	384	6		1.6%
12	Makadara	894	14	10	2.7%
13	Mathare	256	4		1.6%
14	Roysambu	323	5		1.6%
15	Ruaraka	444	7		1.6%
16	Starehe	254	4		1.6%
17	Westlands	383	6		1.6%
Total		6,383	100	10	1.7%

**Source:** Author (2022).

The researcher used a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection, where a number of simple questions conforming to the research objectives were constructed. The

questionnaire majorly consisted of closed-ended questions and a few open-ended questions to get more insights or information to understand the variables further. The researcher used primary data collection methods to get information from the subjects. The main primary method used was questionnaire administration, where a number of simple questions conforming to the research objectives were formed. The questionnaire majorly consisted of closed-ended questions and a few open-ended questions to get more insights or information to understand the variables further. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables was analyzed through linear regressions.

## 7. Data Analysis

### 7.1 Response Rate

The researcher distributed 100 questionnaires to the target population. The questionnaires that were returned were 89 leading to a response rate of 89%. According to (Gathii et al., 2019), a response rate of 80% is determined as being adequate for a study and minimization of non-response bias. The response rate of 89% having surpassed the minimum response rate of 80% was thus deemed sufficient for the study and was thus utilized for the study. The response rate is represented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Response Rate**

Distributed questionnaires	Returned questionnaires	Response rate
100	89	89%

Source: Author (2022).

### 7.2 Demographic Data

#### 7.2.1 Business Profile

The business profile is important to establish if the characteristic of the business can influence the strategies it adopts in the face of disruptive crises. Table 3 below shows that only 25% of the businesses surveyed had been in operation for less than 5 years, with 75% being in operation for more than 5 years. This is a considerable time for businesses to adopt a survival strategy in times of a crisis. 62% were sole proprietorship type of businesses, 31% partnership while only 7% were companies. This indicates that most strategies adopted in the businesses emanated from individuals' decisions as opposed to structured strategy design.

**Table 3: Years in Operation**

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5	22	24.7
5-10 Years	38	42.7
More than 10 Years	29	32.6
Total	89	100.0

Source: Author (2022).

### 7.2.2 Number of Employees before Covid-19 Pandemic

The results of the study revealed that 3.7%, 25.8%, 16.9%, and 14.6% of the businesses had below 10 employees, 11-20 employees, 21-30 employees, and 31-40 employees respectively. On the other hand, 2.2%, 4.5%, and 2.2% of the businesses had 41-50 employees, 51-60 employees and above 60 employees respectively. The study thus found that a majority of the businesses had below 10 employees at 33.7% of all the businesses sampled. See Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Number of Staff before Covid-19 Pandemic

	Frequency	Percentage
Below 10 Employees	30	33.7
11-20 Employees	23	25.8
21-30 Employees	15	16.9
31-40 Employees	13	14.6
41-50 Employees	2	2.2
51-60 Employees	4	4.5
Above 60 Employees	2	2.2
Total	89	100.0

**Source:** Author (2022).

### 7.2.3 Capacity before Covid-19 Pandemic

The capacity before Covid-19 was examined. The study results indicated that 84.3%, 12.4%, and 3.3% of the businesses had 1-200, 201-400, and above 400 capacities respectively. The study indicated that a majority of the businesses at 84.3% of the businesses had 1-200 capacity. See Table 5 below.

**Table 5:** Capacity before Covid-19 Pandemic

	Frequency	Percent
1-200	75	84.3
201-400	11	12.4
Above 400	3	3.3
Total	89	100.0

**Source:** Author (2022).

### 7.2.4 Respondents' Profile

Table 6 below shows that more than 85% (27% +58%) of the respondents surveyed were either owners or managers of the business, meaning they were part of the top management of the enterprises. Table 6 below also shows that 39% of the respondents surveyed had more than 10 years of experience in running the bar and restaurant businesses, with 48% having between 5-10 years of experience. Only 12% had less than 5 years of experience. Table 6 below also shows that 93% of the respondents were aged over 30 years. This analysis indicates that most respondents had considerable authority, knowledge and experience to correctly respond to the survey.

**Table 6: Position Held in Business**

Position	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Manager	52	52.778	58.427	58.427
Owner	24	26.667	26.996	85.393
Supervisor	9	10.000	10.112	95.506
Waiter	4	4.444	4.494	100.000
Missing	1	1.111		
Total	90	100.000		

Source: Author (2022).

**Table 7: Years of Experience in Business**

Years of experience in business	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
5-10	43	47.778	48.135	48.315
Less than 5	11	12.222	12.360	60.674
More than 5	35	38.889	39.326	100.000
Missing	1	1.111		
Total	90	100.000		

Source: Author (2022).

**Table 8: Age of Respondents**

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
30-40	42	46.667	47.191	47.191
Above 40	41	45.556	46.067	93.258
Below 30	6	6.667	6.742	100.000
Missing	1	1.111		
Total	90	100.000		

Source: Author (2022).

### 7.2.5 Social Media Networking

The study found that 31.5%, 12.4%, 27.0%, 28.1%, and 1.1% of the businesses were Lowly Active, Below Average, Moderately, Above Average, and Highly Active on social media respectively during the Covid-19 crisis as shown on Table 9 below.

**Table 9: Extent of Social Media Activity**

	Frequency	Percent
Lowly Active	28	31.5
Below Average	11	12.4
Moderately	24	27.0
Above Average	25	28.1
Highly Active	1	1.1
Total	89	100.0

Source: Author (2022).

The study also noted that 4.5%, 2.2%, 41.6%, 46.1%, and 5.6% of the respondents noted that social media activity kept the business afloat with a Very Negative, Negative, No Effect, Positive and Very Positive effect respectively as shown on Table 10 below.



**Table 10: Effectiveness of Social Media Adoption**

	Frequency	Percent
Very Negative	4	4.5
Negative	2	2.2
No Effect	37	41.6
Positive	41	46.1
Very Positive	5	5.6
Total	89	100.0

**Source:** Author (2022).

### 7.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The study carried out a regression analysis to analyse the existing relationship between the independent and dependent variables. From the linear regression tests, the results captured were presented in the model summary table. The model summary table was used to help in assessing the variability factor on the influence of independent variables on the shift in the dependent variable. According to (Helmreich, 2016), the correlation coefficient is used to detail the association between the independent variables and dependent variables. The study achieved a correlation coefficient R of 0.392 indicating that there was a weak positive correlational association between social media adoption, diversification adoption, and technology & innovation use on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses within Nairobi County. (Wheaton & Young, 2020) noted that the adjusted R square is used for detailing the variance of the dependent variable that is attributable to the independent variable. In this context, the adjusted R square that was achieved was 0.124 indicating that 12.4% of the variance in the dependent variable was attributable to the independent variables of social media adoption, diversification and use of technology. This would imply that 87.6% of the variance in the performance of bar & restaurant businesses was due to other factors that were not in the scope of the model. Table 11 below shows the model summary table.

**Table 11: Regression Model Summary**

<b>Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.392 <sup>a</sup>	.154	.124	.43616

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social media adoption, Diversification strategy, Use of technology

**Source:** Author (2022).

The ANOVA was also used to examine the overall goodness of fit of the model. The study found that  $F(3,85) = 5.143$ ,  $P = 0.03$  implying that the model was good fit for data since p value was less than 0.05 as shown on Table 12 below. The conclusion that the model is good fit for data led to the examination of the t-tests and the regression coefficients.

**Table 12: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2.935	3	.978	5.143	.003 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	16.170	85	.190		
Total	19.106	88			

a. Dependent Variable: performance of bar & restaurant businesses

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social media adoption, Diversification strategy, Use of technology

Source: Author (2022).

Whether the use of technology had statistically significant influence on performance of bar and restaurant businesses was examined using the t-test. Maina (2021) notes that if a variable lacks statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, then the unstandardized beta coefficients are not discussed, which the case in this context is. The study further found that the p-value of the social media adoption stood at 0.131 indicating that the social media adoption did not have a statistically significant influence on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses. The study thus found the social media adoption, and diversification variables not having a statistically significant influence on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses. Only technology & innovation had statistically significant influence on performance of bar & restaurant businesses as shown on

Table 13 below.

**Table 13: Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.118	.315		9.914	.000
	Use of technology	-.256	.093	-.315	-2.748	.007
	Diversification strategy	-.126	.070	-.196	-1.816	.073
	Social media adoption	.086	.056	.167	1.524	.131

a. Dependent Variable: Survival of bar and restaurant businesses

Source: Author (2022).

## 8. Conclusion of the Study

The study also sought to examine the influence of social media on performance of bar & restaurant businesses during crisis in Nairobi County. It noted that the p-value of the social media adoption stood at 0.131 indicating that the social media adoption did not have a statistically significant influence on the performance of bar & restaurant businesses. The study thus found that social media adoption as a variable did not have a statistically significant influence on the performance of bar & businesses. Maina (2021) notes that if a variable lacks statistically significant influence on the dependent variable then the unstandardized beta coefficients are not discussed, which the case in this context is.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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