

## **Uses of Computer Application as Sales Control System in Food and Beverage Section of Hotels in Ebonyi State**

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### **Abstract**

This study determined the possible ways computer system applications (Apps) would be useful in food and beverage (F&B) sections of hotels in Ebonyi State. The area of the study is Afikpo North L.A.G of Ebonyi State. The population of the study was 305 hotel managers and staff. Descriptive survey research design was used. Questionnaire was used to collect data which were analyzed using frequency and mean. Findings include that Apps could be used to monitor the average of F&B turn-over per day, in recording the number of customers made in each day, to measure the quantity of food cooked in each section of the hotel, to determine what items should be reordered or restocked, among others. Based on the findings four recommendations were made for use of Apps in F&B operations.

**Key words:** Computer, Control, System, Food, Beverages, Hotel

### **Introduction**

Food and beverage control system is a means of computerizing best practices within a restaurant or catering operation. It gives managers a better idea of the flow of activities through the restaurant, enabling them to plan cash flow and stock control more effectively. At the sharp end, it provides chefs with a more structured way of planning menus, taking into account nutritional and financial considerations (Koys, 2008). Every Hotel needs proper and effective control system in order to run its operations smoothly and effectively, without any fraudulent activities. This

control is required at each and every stage of the food and beverage cycle including:

- ❖ Taking the customer's food or beverage order
- ❖ Announcing these orders to kitchen or bar as the case may be
- ❖ Getting the order correct and ready on time
- ❖ Serving the correct order, on time with correct serving temperature to the guest
- ❖ Making the correct bill
- ❖ Setting the bill
- ❖ Closing of the restaurant (puneethanta.blogspot.com..., 2013).

The dramatic increase in internet and the detonation of its usage have facilitated the development of electronic commerce, which is described as the movement of buying and selling of food and beverage in the hotel environment, or the trading of products, service and information between and among the organizations and individuals all the way through computer networks including the internet (Laudon and Traver, Lam, Zhang, and Baum, 2005).

Food sales is a business if allowed unchecked can make an establishment bankrupt overnight. Therefore, it is not the workers or masters that should work to control but system should work efficiently to prevent a disaster. The importance of a control system for food and beverage is to ensure proper safety, storage, and security of the restaurant industry's most pilfered, perishable, and accessible assets.

Other functions of a Control System include: monitoring of the area where food and beverage sales take place, reducing pilferage, fraud, and wastage to minimum, providing required information to the management for costing purposes, so that they forecast the statistics accurately for the next financial period, and ensuring that cashiers make bills correctly so that the customer is neither overcharged nor under charged. (puneethanta.blogspot.com..., 2013)

Ingram (2009), also noted that Control System is a process by which a manager attempts to direct, regulate and restrain the action of people in

order to achieve the desired goal. A control system is therefore a device, or set of devices that manage, command, direct or regulate the behavior of other device(s) or system(s) in an establishment like hotel. A hotel is an establishment that provides lodging paid on a short-term basis. The provision of basic accommodation, consisting only of a room with a bed, a cupboard, a small table and a washstand has largely been replaced by rooms with modern facilities, including en-suite bathrooms and air conditioning or climate control. Additional common features found in hotel rooms are a telephone, an alarm clock, a television, a safe, a mini-bar with snack foods and drinks, and facilities for making tea and coffee. Luxury features include bathrobes and slippers, a pillow menu, twin-sink vanities, and Jacuzzi bathtubs. Larger hotels may provide additional guest facilities such as a swimming pool, fitness center, business center, childcare, conference facilities and social function services (Sam *et al*, 2007).

In the hotel, the reception section where reservations are made is usually concentrated with guests seeking for accommodation. Under such contingency, the receptionist is handicapped by his/her human abilities to attending to each guest's request. Going through booking procedure, one experiences delay. The same delay occurs in terms of service of foods and drinks. Koys (2008) pointed out that potential conflict may arise from a misunderstanding of roles

between two colleagues resulting in confusion and the task not being done due to the large number of staff with only a few performing their duties. With the aid of computer application, the system can easily monitor portioning of food and drinks to each guest and will eventually keep an update record of number of portions of food and drinks served to guests in the hotels.

Hotel rooms are usually numbered to allow guests to identify their room. Some hotels offer meals as part of a room and board arrangement. In the United Kingdom, a hotel is required by law to serve food and drinks to all guests within certain stated hours (Sam *et al.*, 2007).

For over the years computer has been known as a machine used in checkmating the turnover of any activities in the office and environment it is being mounted. It is also known that recently that computers are been used in monitoring the activities of hotel, turnover rate of food and beverage in various ways such as knowing the percentage of food sold in a day at the hotel, how many customers that attended buying beverage in at hotel such as snacks, beef, sausage, showman among others (Okereke, 2009).

The use of computer has added much value, by helping the manager and the accountant at hotel establishment to be able to record report of the activities at the hotel per annum, to enable the proper account of the establishment (Oma, 2010).

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During this era where computers began replacing tedious food and beverage sales tasks, there was some changes in productivity, primarily in keeping up with hotel expenses. In some cases, consumers did not have to wait quite as long to check out because of increasingly powerful cash registers and calculators. Some jobs were replaced because the hotel business now did not need as many people to support their customers anymore (Adams, 2008). Computing systems are used in keeping track of what goods (food and beverages) the store had as well as what items should be reordered and restocked. Computer control system also came into wide use in the 1980s, making hotels checkouts much faster (Ferguson, 2007). It was around this time that anti-theft systems became popular in business. Many hotel establishments used computer software to take care of accounting and employee payrolls (Harris, 2007).

Today the world is at the point where new functionality is enhancing the way goods are being sold to

people. For the most part, it was the dot-com boom that paved the way for this new level of computerization. With the World Wide Web emerging as a new method of food and beverage marketing, local businesses could sell products to anyone with access to the Internet. The Web also provides a place where hotels can advertise their products and provide information all over the world (Lewis, 2009).

This study is significant because it acts as a check to both the managers of hotels and customers since it will help to reduce the risk of the thefts and damages.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain possible usefulness of computer applications as a control system in food and beverage section of hotels. Specifically, the study determined the possible ways computer system applications (Apps) could be useful in food and beverage sections of hotels in Ebonyi State.

#### **Methodology**

**Design and area of the study:** Descriptive survey research design was adopted in carrying out the study. The design is therefore appropriate for this study as it intends to obtain data from the Hotel managers, and workers, through the use of structured questionnaire. The area of the study is Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Afikpo is made up of five development centers, Ubeyi Development Center, Amoha Development Center, Amasiri

Development Center, Afikpo North East and Afikpo North Development Center.

**Population for the Study:** The population of the study comprised 305 workers, including store keepers, cooks, laundry workers, housekeepers, receptionists, waiters and five managers from five hotels in the area of study. The hotels include Ndibe Beach Resort, Egesco Hotel, Ebonyi Hotel, Friendship Hotel and Macdoris Hotel. (Source: Afikpo North Hotel Union of Ebonyi Managers' Office, 2014). The entire population was used for the study, hence there was no sampling techniques.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** Questionnaire was developed based on related literature and specific purpose of the study. Responses to the items were based on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The instrument was validated by two lecturers in Home Economics lecturers and one Marketing lecturer. The content and adequacy of the items and the criticism of the lecturers were used to modify the instrument.

**Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis:** Three hundred and five copies of the questionnaire were administered by hand with the help of five research assistants and all the copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. A mean of 3.50 was used as the cut-off point for decision making for each item. Thus, any item with a mean of 3.50 and above was

considered as possible use of computer APP in Food and Beverage section, while any item with a mean below 3.50 was considered 'not a possible use'.

### Findings of the study

Twenty two uses of computer APPS were identified with regards to the Food and Beverage section of the hotels in Ebonyi State. These are shown in Table below

**Table 1:** Mean Responses of uses of the application of computer system on the sales turn-over of Food and Beverage Company (FBC)

S/N	Possible Uses of Computer System Apps in FBC		Remarks
<i>Computer systems can be used to:</i>			
1.	monitor the average of food and beverages turn-over per day	3.57	Agreed
2.	record the number of customers made in each day.	3.53	Agreed
3.	measure the quantity of food cooked in each section of the hotel	3.95	Agreed
4.	determine what items should be reordered or restocked	3.57	Agreed
5.	order food and beverages from food supplies	3.55	Agreed
6.	to order or reserve order using computerized system	3.52	Agreed
7.	increase efficiency and production output.	3.54	Agreed
8.	monitor daily sales thereby increases profit	3.50	Agreed
9.	control the movement of buying and selling operations of food and beverages in the hotel environment	2.26	Disagreed
10.	maintain the pricing mechanism	3.53	Agreed
11.	make for easy location and identification of products	3.56	Agreed
12.	ensure account reconciliation	3.55	Agreed
13.	maintain product security	3.54	Agreed
14.	examine the excess of sales operatives	3.57	Agreed
15.	invest online/internet marketing	3.83	Agreed
16.	ensure expired product are not sold to customers	3.51	Agreed
17.	monitor the safety of products	3.57	Agreed
18.	enhance packaging	3.62	Agreed
19.	ensure product durability	3.70	Agreed
20.	increase sales	3.72	Agreed
21.	maintain product quality	3.60	Agreed
22.	give information in food beverages	3.50	Agreed
23.	catalogue the products	3.69	Agreed

Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that 22 of the items are possible uses of computer application (App) as sales control system in the food and beverage section of the hotel. It also shows item 9 with the mean score of 2.26 is not a possible use of App.

### Discussion of the Findings

The results of the study show that application of computer system could influence the sales turn-over of a food and beverage company. This is in line with observations of Laudon and Traver, (2005) that dramatic increase in internet and the detonation of its

usage have facilitated the development of electronic commerce, which is described as the movement of buying and selling of food and beverage in the hotel environment, or the trading of products. The findings are also consistent with those of David (2009). Okereke, (2009) also noted that the use of computer application has added much value in the hotel businesses by helping the manager and the accountant at hotel establishment to be able to record report of the activities at the hotel per annum. The importance of a control system for food and beverage is to ensure proper safety, storage, and security of the restaurant industry's most pilfered, perishable, and accessible assets.

Computer in enhancing the quality of services in hotel services is most beneficial, and had future benefits for the hotels owners (Reid and Sandler, 2008). The use of computer in food and beverage section of the hotel also eliminates revenue leakages by ensuring that all the orders are billed. It reduces clerical errors to minimum, it avoids duplication of work, it saves time, generates bills quickly without any mistake. (puneethanta.blogspot.com..., 2013). These are also consistent with the findings of the present study.

The owners of most F&B enterprises are generally concerned with the level of profit of the operation. In order to maximize profit, it is necessary to make sure that costs are kept in line with what they should have been (expenses) and that

appropriate marketing is done to get customers in the door (revenues). It is important to recognize that in addition to profit centered enterprises, many F&B operations do not have profit as their major objective. Many institutional operations are focused on breaking even or maintaining a particular budget level. Whichever approach is followed, the primary job of the chef, as kitchen manager, is to make sure that the quality of the product is as good as it can be and that the costs are kept under control (www.professionalchef.com, 2014)

### **Conclusion**

In today's food service operations, computer has become an integral part and is used in every sphere of operations. Computerized pre-check systems are extensively used in food and beverage as sales control measures. The use of computer application as sales control system in food and beverage ensures good control over the operations, it increase productivity and reduces labour costs. It therefore ensures that the quality of the product is as good as it can be and that the costs are kept under control.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. The entire hotel in Ebonyi State should go into modernization by upgrading the hotels to computer working hotel in other to bring comfort to the customers and to

- increase efficiency and production output.
2. The use of computer application should be encouraged to reduce pilferage, fraud and wastage to minimum
  3. The use of computer application help cashiers to make bills correctly so that the customer is neither overcharged nor undercharged. This has become necessary as food and beverages has reached the point where the use of information systems is a necessity, and that computer systems must be integrated to provide management with the tools necessary to compete effectively in a drastically constricted economy.
  4. Computer services that will enhance quality of services included: a wake up system, electronic door locks, in-room pay-per-view, video cassette players, multiple phone lines, video library, personal computers, voice mail, computer modern connections, and video check out, electronic in-room, safes, and a software library should be installed in all the hotels in Ebonyi State for more effective services

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