



Is there a future for robots in South African restaurants?

Robots have been introduced in many industries, also the restaurant sector. Restaurants can use robots to fulfil many roles. A chef robot, for instance, is in charge of food preparation, whilst a host robot, on the other hand, is in charge of greeting customers and escorting them to their tables. Robots can also serve food and even wash dishes. They are known to increase efficiency, reduce labour costs, improve productivity, make operations more streamline and offer unique dining experiences for patrons. Even so, robots in restaurants are not that common, and not much is known about the factors that will influence a diner to choose a robotic restaurant. A research study was conducted by Nobuhle Dashe, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to determine whether factors such as attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and motivated consumer innovativeness can explain South Africans' intentions to use robotic restaurants. An online survey was used to collect data from 169 South Africans who had visited sit-down restaurants in the three months prior to data collection. The results show that attitude and subjective norms are key predictors of respondents' intention to use robotic restaurants. New technological innovations are often seen as social trends, and therefore it is understandable that subjective norms play a significant role in determining diners' intentions to use robotic restaurants. To increase South Africans' intentions to use robotic restaurants, manager should aim to position their restaurants as providing superior convenience, increased efficiency and utmost ease. These benefits should be innovatively advertised to potential diners to build a positive image in their minds. Technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) could be used to allow consumers to visualise a dining experience at a robotic restaurant.

Consumer behaviour in the context of robotic restaurants has not been sufficiently explored and only a limited number of studies provide empirical evidence. This study thus makes a significant contribution to the literature by explaining the factors that form South Africans' intentions to use robotic restaurants.

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