

IMPORTANCE OF FACILITIES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE ON LEISURE GUESTS' CHOICE OF HOTELS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Hotel room revenue and occupancy rate have continued to experience exponential growth in contemporary Nigeria. In spite of this, hotel patronage is still regarded by many as indecent behavior as a result of traditional and religious beliefs notwithstanding the improvement in hotel facilities and services. Moreover, it is not empirically established if these facilities and services provided by hotel management in Nigeria influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. To achieve these objectives and establish a framework of leisure guests' choice of hotels, this study used multiple regression analysis to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of SPSS Version 20.0 software at 5% level of significance. Findings from a convenience sample of 323 respondents who lodge in hotels in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria show that the two factors investigated namely facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. More importantly, facilities have more influence than customer service. As a result, the study concludes that hotel patronage for leisure should not be seen as indecent behavior but as an avenue to scintillate consumer sense of adventure and imagination and help in boosting lifestyle and tourism in Nigeria. Finally, the study made recommendations to key stakeholders in the hotel industry.

Keywords: Facilities, Customer Service, Leisure Guests, Choice, Hotel.

INTRODUCTION

The year 1829 ushered in a paradigm shift in the evolution of the global hospitality and tourism industry. Interestingly, this was the year when an American architect Isaiah Rogers designed and constructed the first luxury hotel “*Tremont Hotel*” in Boston, Massachusetts and was the first hotel with private attached bathroom and lock on the doors (Russell & Dawson, 2022). Moreover, “*Tremont Hotel*” used a steam-powered pump to lift up water to the storage tank on the roof (Russell & Dawson, 2022). At the same time, the hotel incorporated many other hotel “*firsts*” like indoor plumbing, indoor toilets, reception area, free soap, bell boys, as well as set the standard for luxury accommodation, thereby emerging as the model for many hotels built in major cities at the time. In consequence, the hotels both in developed and developing countries of the world kept improving their services and facilities to match or outclass the set standard to compete favorably with other hotels. Of course, this trend has continued to the present day in a bid to entice hotel guests away from other hotels. That is to say, these hotel amenities and

services have continued to be employed by hoteliers in contemporary times and hotels continue to grow in numbers.

To be more precise, statistics indicate that there are at least 187,000 hotels in the world as of 2022 with an estimated 17.5 million guestrooms (McCain, 2022). Also, there are a variety of hotel types that typically can be categorized by size, function, service and cost. More importantly, levels of hotel service available can usually be split into three options: limited service, middle-range service, and full service. Thus, hotel revenue continues to grow globally. It is estimated that revenue in the hotel segment is projected to reach US\$408.80 billion in 2023 with a Cumulative Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4.28% from 2023-2027 resulting in a projected market volume of US\$483.40 billion by 2027.

Interestingly, in 2018, the hotel room revenue in Nigeria reached 252 million U.S. dollars and was forecasted to reach 445 million U.S. dollars in 2023. In addition, the Nigerian hospitality sector witnessed sustained occupancy rate of between 70-80 percent across some independent hotels for the half year 2022, a pointer to the fast recovery of the sector from the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the hotel industry continues to play an important role in the Nigerian economy.

Statement of the Problem

Regrettably, notwithstanding the growth in hotel room revenue coupled with sustained occupancy rate and the concomitant improvement in hotel facilities and services in the Nigerian context, hotel patronage is still regarded by many as indecent behavior as a result of traditional and religious beliefs. This scenario is even obtainable in neighboring countries like Ghana (Richard & Masud, 2016). In consequence, romantic and close male-female social interactions for leisure, fun, enjoyment, good time, pleasure, relaxation or adventure in hotel settings are not generally acceptable. More importantly, the perception of a large number of potential leisure guests in the Nigerian hotel industry negatively impacts the industry's revenue and contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a result of these cultural imperatives. Besides, it is not empirically established if these facilities and customer services provided by hotel management in the country influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Certainly, hospitality and tourism scholars in Europe, Asia, North America and New Zealand have executed studies in the hotel sector to understand consumer choice in hotel selection in three segmented markets: leisure guests, business travellers and meeting and convention customers (Weaver & Oh, 1993; Tsaur & Gwo-Hsiung, 1995; Callan, 1996; Dube & Renaghan, 1999; Lockyer, 2000; Sohrabi et al., 2011; Kucukusta, 2017; Souldidou et al., 2018). On the contrary, most Nigerian studies carried out in this domain were not focused on specific target markets in the hotel industry (e.g., Ndukaet al., 2017; Anetoh et al., 2022). The very few indigenous studies carried out specifically in the leisure guests' market (Ogbunankwor et al., 2022) were limited to investigating the influence of cleanliness and location on consumer choice of hotels thereby leaving out additional factors such as facilities and customer service. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap in the literature.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to establish a model of the determinants of consumer choice of hotels in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Accordingly, this objective can be broken down into the following specific objectives:

1. To find out whether facilities have a significant effect on consumer choice of hotels.
2. To examine the extent to which customer service contributes to consumer choice of hotels.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in many ways. To begin with, the study is considerable owing to the fact that there is relatively a dearth of empirical studies that examined the determinants of consumer choice of hotels in any of the different segments of the hotel industry in the Nigerian context. At the same time, the study will add to the stock of existing knowledge and provide a base for further studies in this area of hospitality and tourism research. The study will also be beneficial to hotel owners, hotel managers and members of the Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria (FTAN) who operate hotel businesses in Nigeria. Additionally, the regulatory authority in the industry, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) will equally benefit from the results of this study as it will aid the knowledge of what determines consumer choice of hotels, hence they will regulate better on hotel lodging and accommodation issues. The study will be beneficial to hotel guests, hotel consultants, other hospitality and tourism industry consultants, marketing consultants, and hospitality and tourism industry practitioners. Finally, it will also be beneficial to researchers and academicians in the course of their professions as it will not only add to the stock of existing literature but will also act as a springboard for future research in this area of hospitality and tourism research.

Scope of the Study

The present study is domiciled within the domain of consumer behavior. In terms of geographical scope, the study covers Awka metropolis. This is because Awka is the administrative capital of Anambra State, Nigeria and is a cosmopolitan city containing people with different demographic background. Nevertheless, the major entity that is being analyzed in this study is hotel leisure guests.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework: Stimulus- Response Model

The theoretical framework of the present study is developed based on the adaptation of the Stimulus-Response (S-R) model. To begin with, Mehrabian & Russel (1974) originally proposed Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model from environmental psychology (Figure 1). The basic premise underlying the SOR model is a three-step process that encompasses the stimulus, organism and response reaction. In other words, the environmental stimulus triggers internal processes and structures (organism) which leads to a behavioural response of an individual (such as approach or avoidance).

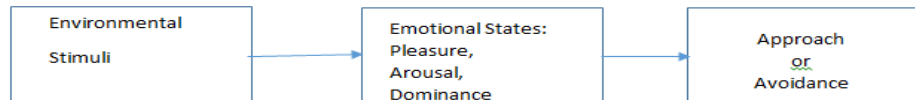


FIGURE 1
THE STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE MODEL (MEHRABIAN AND RUSSEL, 1974)

In contrast, according to Kotler (1997), the S-R model is a two-step overt process that contains four marketing stimuli dimensions, namely, product, price, place and promotion and that consumers are also exposed to environmental stimuli that include economic, political, technological and cultural dimensions. The buyer's mental processes are visualized as a black box that is unseen and the responses are of buyer decisions that include product choice, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase quantity, and purchase timing (Kotler, 1997). In other words, the SOR model is an abridged version of the SOR model.

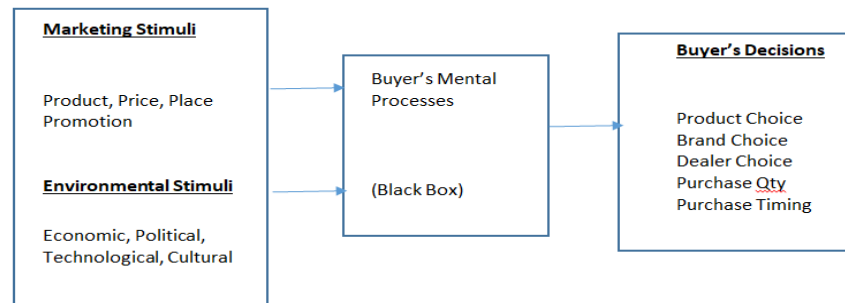


FIGURE 2
THE BASIC STIMULUS-RESPONSE MODEL (KOTLER, 1997)

Moreover, the S-R model or its extensions has been applied in different industries by several studies. These include the mobile telecom industry (Kim & Rha, 2016; Alsaggaf & Althonayan, 2018; Cheng et al., 2019), retail industry (Chang et al., 2011; Graa & Dani-elkemir, 2012; Goi et al., 2014) and restaurant industry. Others include the online shopping industry and flea market industry (de Villiers et al., 2017). More importantly, several researchers have applied the S-R model or its extensions in their studies carried out in the hospitality and tourism industry (Nunthiphatprueksa, 2017; Chen et al., 2021) and particularly the hotel industry (Jani & Han, 2015; Chen et al., 2022). Nevertheless, Kanagal (2016) proposed an extended stimulus-response model of behavioural processes in consumer decision making.

For the purpose of the present study, the application of the Stimulus –Response model is as follows: firstly, the ‘*stimulus*’ is represented by the facilities and customer service variables. To be more precise, facilities and customer service attributes are variants of product as a marketing stimulus. Secondly, the ‘*response*’ is represented by choice of hotels. Moreover, this study does not introduce ‘*organism*’ as the internal processes and structures intervening between the stimuli and the responses emitted as obtained in the S-O-R system because the consumers’ mental processes are unseen.

Interestingly, the S-R model as shown in Figure 2 is arguably the most common model in consumer behaviour used to understand the buying behaviour of individuals buying consumer product (Kotler, 1997; Kanagal, 2016).

Empirical Review

The main thrust of this section is to review empirical studies conducted in the area of determinants of consumer choice of hotels. Since avalanche of studies have been conducted in different countries of the world dominated by Asian, European and North American studies, and even across continents, there is every need to review these studies.

Studies on Determinants of Consumer Choice of Hotels

Many academic studies have been conducted to understand the determinants of consumer choice of hotels in North America (Saleh & Ryan, 1992.; Weaver & Oh, 1993; Dube & Renaghan, 1999; Dube & Renaghan, 2000), Western Europe (Callan, 1996; Callan, 1998), Asia (Sohrabi et al., 2011; Baniya & Thapa, 2017; Yang et al., 2017), New Zealand, Ghana and Greece (Lockyer, 2000; Richard & Masud, 2016) respectively. Likewise, similar researches have been conducted across continents Barsky (2012) and even on a global scale (Barsky & Nash, 2010). Many of these studies were undertaken in segmented markets in order to contribute in ensuring maximal satisfaction of the consumers and the creation of more attractive offerings for each target market. On the contrary, researches carried out on the determinants of consumer choice in hotel selection and related topics in the Nigerian context were not focused on specific target markets and fewer scholars published internationally (Gbenga & Osotimehin, 2015; Nduka et al., 2017; Otegbulu & Tenigbade, 2011, Oladele et al., 2019).

As has been said previously, hospitality and tourism researchers have segmented the hotel market into three homogenous groups or segments namely leisure guests, business travellers, and meeting and convention customers (Dube & Renaghan, 1999). This development encouraged several empirical studies within and across countries on determinants of consumer choice in hotel selection.

A plethora of studies have sought to establish the perceptions of leisure guests with reference to hotel selection. For example, a study conducted in Taipei, Taiwan categorized hotel service attributes into seven hierarchies which include business image, hotel location, service attitude, room service, beverage and food service, hotel facilities, and hotel environment (Tsaur & Gwo-Hshung, 1995). In the same way, promenade and comfort, security and protection, network services, pleasure, staff and their services, news and recreational information, cleanliness and room comfort, expenditure, room facilities and car parking were identified as the main hotel selection factors of Tehran hotels in Iran by (Sohrabi et al., 2011). In a similar study, Kucukusta (2017) investigated how Chinese leisure traveler's value hotel amenities when they book hotel rooms in Hong Kong and found that price had the highest average important value, followed by airport/local area shuttles, wireless internet, breakfast and quality of coffee/tea. A fourth study in this category by Baniya & Thapa (2017) executed in Nepal found that service quality and room and front desks play significant role in satisfaction of international tourists whereas security, business facility, value, food and recreation were found to be insignificant. Finally, a Greek study by Soulidou et al., (2018) found cleanliness as the most important factor in the selection of accommodation, followed by price and staff.

Nevertheless, several studies have examined the perceptions of business travellers with regards to hotel selection.

1. Weaver & Oh (1993) categorized American business travellers into the frequent business traveller and infrequent business traveller and gave a demographic profile of these categories.
2. A United Kingdom study by Callan (1996) summarized a number of research projects that had been conducted and of particular interest is the finding that within many of those, the standard of housekeeping and cleanliness was rated as the most important in the selection of accommodation by guests.
3. Lockyer (2000) conducted a study in New Zealand and found cleanliness of hotel, bath and shower, standard of bedroom maintenance, and comfortable mattress and pillow as the four most important criteria out of the forty-seven factors rated by participants.
4. Dube & Renaghan (2000) discovered the top five hotel selection attributes for business travellers in the United States to include location, brand name and reputation, physical property, value for money, and guest-room design.
5. Barsky (2012) conducted a study among American, European and Asian consumers and discovered that location, price and past experience influence hotel selection in that order. Lastly, a Chinese study by Yang et al., (2017) revealed that location, price and business functions were factors influencing guest choice of hotel.

Studies have also been executed to ascertain meeting and convention customer's perceptions with regards to hotel selection attributes. One of such studies carried out in South Korea by Upchurch et al., (2000) reported that when selecting a hotel, customers look for quality service, meeting room facilities/quality, inventory, and hotel personnel. Another study by Jahenbani (2018) executed in the United States found longevity of staff, quality service, and the creation of an experience as key factors prioritized by meeting customers when choosing a luxury hotel for a meeting.

Moreover, studies on determinants of consumer choice in hotel selection can also involve the total, heterogeneous market. To begin with a study conducted by Saleh & Ryan (1992) in a Western Canadian city indicated that the availability of a restaurant, convenient parking, interior decor and exterior aesthetics were factors that led to hotel selection by guests. At the same time, a study carried out in the United Kingdom by Callan (1998) identified 166 attributes related to hotel selection process to include location, price, image, security and staff competence. A study conducted in the United States by Dube & Renaghan (1999) identified constant and easy accessibility of rooms and services with which they become familiar as factors that contribute to guests' hotel selection. The study described the variance in response according to leisure, transient business, and meeting and convention guests. Later, a study conducted in New Zealand by Lockyer (2005) initially showed that cleanliness was rated the most important factor, and price rated a lot less important. During the next stage of the research, price emerged as the most important factor with cleanliness rated the lowest ranking of the five emergent categories which include facilities, location and staff service. Also, a global study by Baksy & Nash (2010) found that guest experience has the most influence on hotel selection and is more important to guests than either location or price. Finally, a Ghanaian study by Richard & Masud (2016) found that consumers' patronage of hotel services is influenced largely by religion and to some extent traditional beliefs of consumers in Ghana.

Nevertheless, comparative studies also exist in the context of choice in hotel selection. For example, a New Zealand study by Lockyer (2002) conducted a comparative study to analyze what accommodation managers and business guests believe were the factors influencing accommodation selection. The study revealed that accommodation guests gauge cleanliness and related items as the most important whereas industry indicates almost uniformly that price is the

most influential factors in guest selection. An earlier study by Chu & Choi (2000) compared business and leisure travellers in Hong Kong hotel industry and found that both parties held the same perceptions towards all the six hotel selection factors. These factors include service quality, business facilities, value, room and front desk, food and recreation, and security. Certainly, room and front desk, and security were found to be the determining factors for business and leisure travellers respectively in their hotel choice selection (Chu & Choi, 2000).

Studies on hotel choice selection are not restricted to empirical studies. Interestingly, conceptual studies also exist in this domain. For instance, Dolnicar & Otter (2003) reviewed 21 studies undertaken over the period of 1984-2000 and extracted 173 attributes influencing occupancy. These include such factors as image, service, price/value, hotel room, food and beverage, security and others.

Previous Studies on Determinants of Consumer Choice of Hotels in Nigeria

Interestingly, Nigerian scholars have conducted related empirical researches on the determinants consumer choice in hotel selection especially in recent years. One of such studies by Otegbulu & Tenigbade (2011) investigated attributes that affect hotel customers' perception. The findings show that regular power and water supply, closeness to the city center and good room service are some of the attributes that lodgers find most important in a hotel accommodation. Another study Akaegbu, (2013) reported that the availability of regular electricity and water supply, among other factors were perceived highly by customers in their decisions about hotel offerings. A third study by Gbenga & Osotimehin (2015) found that service of the hotel, friendly staff, food quality and price had significant impact on repeat buy. A fourth study, Kukoyi & Iwuagwu (2015) revealed that service delivery and customer satisfaction are significantly related and could increase the patronage in a hotel. Furthermore, Nduka et al., (2017) identified cost, hotel environment hotel facilities income and staff performance as key factors that have strong influence on the customers in the hospitality industry. A sixth study, Oladele et al., (2019) found that customers patronage of hotels is a function of the good access road, constant electricity, constant water supply, basic security facilities and convenient parking space in that order. A seventh study, Anetoh et al., (2022) found security, location, physical facility, rooms quality, electricity, service delivery and accommodation as crucial factors influencing consumer choice of hotels. Finally, Ogbunankwor et al., (2022) found that cleanliness and location influence leisure guests choice of hotels.

Apparently, apart from Ogbunankwor et al., (2022), most studies on hotel choice selection in Nigeria were not carried out according to market segments (leisure guests, transient business travellers, meeting and convention customers). Moreover, the current literature suggests that facilities and customer service are the two most highlighted factors influencing consumer choice of hotels. Thus, these factors are the most suitable for helping us provide an empirical uncontroversial evidence of what works in Nigeria with respect to leisure guests' choice of hotel.

Hypotheses Development

The two factors identified were reviewed in this research. The proposed hypotheses to be tested in the empirical study are explained below.

Facilities

Researchers in Nigeria and abroad have suggested that consumers are more inclined to choose a hotel if facilities of any kind are made available to them (Tsaur & Gwo-Hshing, 1995; Lockyer, 2005; Sohrabi et al., 2011; Otegbulu & Tenigbade, 2011; Akaegbu, 2013; Nduka et al., 2017; Oladele et al., 2020; Anetoh et al., 2022). On the other hand, the study by Baniya & Thapa (2017) revealed that facilities do not significantly influence consumer choice of hotels. As a result, we put forward the first hypothesis:

- H₁: Facilities do not significantly predict consumer choice of hotels*
H₂: Facilities significantly predict consumer choice of hotels.

Customer Service

Some studies in Nigeria and abroad have shown that customer service no matter the kind strongly influences consumer choice in hotel selection (Dube & Renaghan, 1999; Lockyer, 2005; Sohrabi et al., 2011; Otegbulu & Tenigbade, 2011; Gbenga & Osotimehin, 2015; Kukoyi & Iwuagwu, 2015; Baniya & Thapa, 2017). In contrast, Ali et al., (2021) found a dimension of customer service not to have positive relation with customer satisfaction to influence their choice of hotels. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis based on previous literature:

- H₃: Customer service does not significantly predict consumer choice of hotels.*
H₄: Customer service significantly predicts consumer choice of hotels.

Conceptual Model

The research model is formulated based on the foregoing discussion and hypotheses (Figure 3). In consequence, this model is the most suitable for helping us confirm whether these distilled factors are at work in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

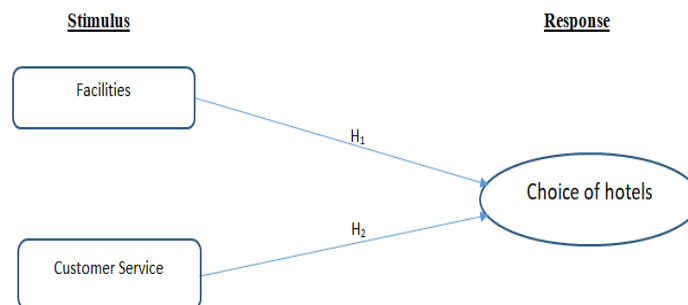


FIGURE 3
PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research design was adopted in this study and cross-sectional survey which is the predominant method of executing this type of research design is also adopted.

Area of Study

The area of study is Awka metropolis, South-east of Nigeria, famous for the proliferation of hotels thereby attracting many visitors. Moreover, Awka is the administrative capital of Anambra state, South East, Nigeria and exhibits a cosmopolitan atmosphere and contain people of different demographic, socio-cultural, and psychographic and psychographic background who patronize hotels.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises leisure guests who lodge in hotels in Awka metropolis of Anambra state, Nigeria. Since there is no accurate statistics on the number of leisure guests who lodge in hotels in Awka metropolis, at any given time, the population is not known.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

As the population could not be ascertained, the sample size was determined by estimating the sample based on a proportion. According to Rose, Spinks & Canhoto (2014), the sample size estimate can be obtained by the formula:

$$\eta = \frac{(1.96)^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where n = sample size

d = degree of precision or the margin of error that is acceptable.

p = proportion of the population having the characteristic.

q = proportion of the population not having the characteristic.

However, because the population is not known, then for a degree of precision (d) of 5%, and a proportion of the population having the characteristic (p) of 70% and a proportion of the population not having the characteristic (q) of 30%, the sample size required for the study is calculated as

$$n = \frac{(1.92)^2(0.70)(0.30)}{0.05^2} = 322.69 \text{ respondents}$$

The sample size here is 322.69, rounded up to 323 respondents since population is a discrete variable.

Leisure guests at five hotels in Awka namely, Adig Suites, CIHCOHTEL Classique Hotel, Cosmila Suites & Hotel, Parktonian Hotels and Tracy Hotels were judgmentally selected for the study. They are judgmentally sampled because of their closeness to the city center. On the other hand, convenience sampling technique was used to administer the survey instrument to holidaymakers lodging at the hotels especially during weekends.

Instrument of Data Collection

The questionnaire is the survey instrument of data collection. Moreover, the questionnaire had two major parts. The first part comprised the introductory letter, instructions

for completing the questionnaire and the respondent's demographic data. The demographic variables were sought using closed-ended, multiple-choice or dichotomous questions. Also, questions regarding the usage of hotels by participants were asked.

The second part of the questionnaire contains the core subject-matter section and was developed based on the proposed research model in the above figure. This part of the questionnaire contains questions to enable the researcher meet the objectives of the study and also test the formulated hypotheses. In other words, they contain the independent and dependent variables of interest in the study. This second part consisted of 13 questions concerning leisure guests' perceptions in hotel selection. These questions used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-extremely unimportant to 5-extremely important, in addition to 3 - have no option/don't know/not applicable. Table 1 for the constructs, their sources and the corresponding adapted items that make up the survey questions.

Construct	Source(s)	Adapted Item
Facilities	Akaegbu (2013)	Availability of regular electricity and water supply. (x ₁)
		Restaurant available. (x ₂)
	Lockyer (2005)	Pool available. (x ₃)
		Relaxing lounge and bar available. (x ₄)
		Access to gym facilities. (x ₅)
Customer Service	Lockyer (2005)	Efficiency of front desk staff on check in, check out, and billing. (x ₆)
		Courteous, polite and mannered staff. (x ₇)
		Sympathetic handling of complaints. (x ₈)
		Service provided as ordered and prompt. (x ₉)
Choice of hotel	Clemes et al (2009)	I will choose a hotel if customers say positive things about the hotel to other people. (x ₁₀)
		I will choose a hotel if there is likelihood of coming back to the hotel again. (x ₁₁)
		I will choose a hotel if I consider the hotel as first one on the list when searching for accommodation. (x ₁₂)
		I will choose a hotel if I can recommend the hotel to other people. (x ₁₃)

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Validation of the instrument was conducted by using face validity method sometimes referred to as content validity (Hair et al., 2000). This was done by having a panel involving three experts: one from the academia and two from the hotel industry independently judge how well the constructs' measurable components represent the constructs.

Due to the nature of the instrument, Cronbach alpha on all the variables in the study was computed to ascertain the internal consistency of the research instrument. In consequence, the Cronbach alpha values were considered high enough and it is believed that the instrument is reliable. This is because the Cronbach alpha coefficients are greater than the 0.7 benchmark recommended by Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins & Kuppelwieser (2014). As presented in the Cronbach's coefficient alphas for facilities, customer service, and choice of hotels are 0.997,

0.995 and 0.992 respectively. The results of this analysis done using SPSS are shown in Table 2 below:

Variable	Cronbach's alpha value
Facilities	0.997
Customer Service	0.995
Choice of hotels	0.992

Administration of the Instrument

The copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher himself with the help of other research assistant's mostly front desk staff at the hotels. To ensure that the distribution and collection processes were systematic and objective, the drop-off and pick-up method Ibeh (2004) was adopted in administering the questionnaire. More importantly, the researcher and his assistants made sure the copies of the questionnaire were not administered to meeting and convention guests, and business travelers.

Method of Data Analysis

To test the significant effect and the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables, multiple regression analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of SPSS Version 20.0 software at 5% level of significance. The decision rule for the hypotheses is to accept the alternative hypotheses if the p-value (the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis) of the test statistic is less or equal to the alpha (α) at 5% (0.05) and to reject the alternative hypothesis if the p-value of the test statistic is greater than significance level (α) at 5% (0.05) significance level. Moreover, multiple regression analysis was used because the model encompasses one dependent variable (choice of hotels) with linear relationship with the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique which analyzes the linear relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables by estimating coefficients for the equation for a straight line (Hair et al., 2000). All the items in the dimension of each variable were used to test each hypothesis.

Instrument Administration and Collection

The number of copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents tallied with the already determined sample size of the study. Table 3 below shows the distribution and collection statistics of the research instrument.

Returned and Usable Copies Analysis			Copies/Rate Usable to Total Copies Produced	
Copies produced and distributed	Copies returned and usable	Copies not returned/not collected and unusable	Copies usable to total copies produced	Percentage of copies usable to copies produced
323(100%)	268(83%)	55(17%)	268/323	83%

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The above table is broken down into two major parts. The first parts, *Returned and Usable Copies Analysis*, shows that the total copies of the questionnaire produced and distributed to the respondents in accordance with the sample size were 323, which is 100%. Out of this figure, 268 were returned and usable representing an 83% response rate. Nevertheless, copies of the questionnaire not returned and unusable were 55, which represent 17% of the total copies produced and distributed. As a result, following the 70% minimum return rate suggested by scholars like Kothari (2011), the 83% response rate in the study is considered sufficiently high.

The second part of which is the *Rate Usable to Total Copies Produced* compares the usable copies with the total copies produced. As shown, 268 returned usable copies represents 83% of the 323 total copies of the questionnaire produced and distributed. This rate as previously stated is once again considered sufficiently high to proceed with the study.

Data Presentation

In the section, the data is presented using a frequency table and simple percentages.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Table 4 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample which is validly 268 hotel leisure guests. This is shown hereunder.

Items	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	122	45.5
	Female	146	54.5
Age	18-29	144	53.7
	30-39	65	24.2
	40-49	35	13.1
	50-59	16	6
	60 and above	8	3
	Occupation	Civil/Public Servant	
Student		88	32.8
Business/Trading		104	38.8
Farming		59	22
Others		5	1.9
		12	4.5
Income per month	Below ₦30,000	112	41.8
	₦30,000-₦50,000	64	23.9
	₦50,001-₦70,000	38	14.2
	₦70,001 and above	54	20.1
Educational Attainment	Non-Formal/Primary	4	1.5
	Secondary	30	11.2
	Tertiary	159	59.3
	Postgraduate	75	28
Numbers of Times Respondents Stayed in hotel in the past three years	Once	50	18.7
	Twice	46	17.2
	Thrice	47	17.5

	Four times	32	11.9
	Five times and above	93	34.7

Data Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
COH	5	2	395	164	207.804	0.604	0.913
FCT	5	4	509	205	263.2366	0.614	0.913
CUS	5	3	404	164	207.5102	0.614	0.913

From the descriptive statistics of the variables as shown in Table 5, the mean value of 164.0 for Choice of Hotel (COH) also shows maximum and minimum values of 395.0 and 2.0 respectively for the same attribute. The standard deviation stood at 207.8. The facilities variable has a mean value of 205.0 with maximum and minimum values of 509.0 and 4.0 respectively while the standard deviation is 263.2. The customer service variable has a mean value of 164.0, with maximum and minimum values of 404.0 and 3.0 respectively. The standard deviation stood at 207.5.

Test of Hypothesis

The hypotheses in this section are tested one after the other. Data from Table 6 above were subjected to regression analysis using SPSS Version 20.0 software.

COH	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Coefficients	t	p-value
FCT	0.997	0.996	0.998	31.013	0
CUS	0.997	0.996	0.998	30.262	0

Hypothesis One

H₅: Facilities do not significantly predict consumer choice of hotels.

H₆: Facilities significantly predict consumer choice of hotels.

The above table shows regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of facilities on choice of hotels. The Adjusted R Square is the coefficient of determination which tells us the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. From the findings, the value of the Adjusted R Square was 0.996, an indication that there was variation of 99.6% on choice of hotels due to changes in facilities. This implies that 99.6% changes in choice of hotels could be accounted for by facilities, while 0.4% was explained by unknown variables that were not included in the model.

From the table, it reveals that the p-value is 0.000 indicating that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5% or 0.05); hence p-value of the test statistic is less than the alpha value (0.000 < 0.05). The regressed result shows that an evaluation of facilities as the explanatory variable shows positive statistical significance, hence coefficient value (beta

value) = 0.998 and t-statistics is = 31.013. This shows that facilities have a positive statistically significant effect on choice of hotels at 5% level of significance.

Decision: Since p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha, we therefore, reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternative hypothesis which states that facilities significantly predict consumer choice of hotels.

Hypothesis Two

H₇: Customer service does not significantly predict consumer choice of hotels.

H₈: Customer service significantly predicts consumer choice of hotels

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the influence of customer service on choice of hotel. The Adjusted R-Square is coefficient of determination which tells us the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. From the findings, the value of the Adjusted R-Square was 0.996, an indication that there was variation of 99.6% on choice of hotels due to changes in customer service. This implies that 99.6% changes in choice of hotels could be accounted for by customer service, while only 0.4% was explained by unknown variables that were not included in the model.

Also, from the table, it reveals that the ANOVA p-value is 0.000, a figure lower than the significance level (α) of 0.05. The regressed result shows that an evaluation of customer service as the explanatory variable shows positive statistical significance, hence coefficient value (beta value)=0.998 and t-statistics is=30.262, showing that customer service has a positive statistical significance on choice of hotels at 5% level of significance (Chinedum, 2017; Adesina 2015;).

Decision: Since p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha, we therefore, reject the null hypotheses and uphold the alternative hypotheses which states that customer service significantly predicts consumer choice of hotels.

Below is a summary table for analysis of variable towards choice of hotels.

Hypothesis	Variables Involved	t-statistics	ANOVA p-value	Remark
H ₁	Facilities Vs. Choice of hotel	31.013	0	Significant Relationship
H ₂	Customer service Vs. Choice of hotel	30.262	0	Significant Relationship

The result of the analysis including the variables involved, the estimated parameters, their t-statistics and ANOVA p-values are shown in (Table 7). As shown in the above table, the two hypothesized relationships (the relationship between choice of hotels and facilities, choice of hotels and customer service) in the research model are statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$. In addition, the results indicate that facilities have more influence than customer service on consumer choice of hotels with approximately t-values of 31.0% and 30.3% respectively.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The present study supports prior studies conducted in different parts of the world as well as provides evidence of some contradictions. That is to say, facilities and customer service are critical determinants of consumer choice of hotels in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

As has been said previously, facilities influence consumer choice of hotels among hotel leisure guests in Awka, Nigeria. This finding corroborates the finding in a New Zealand study (Lockyer, 2005), an Iranian study (Sohrabi et al., 2011; Wu, 2009) and several Nigerian studies (Otegbulu & Tenigbade, 2011; Akaegbu, 2013; Nduka et al., 2017; Oladele et al., 2020; Anetoh et al., 2022; Chu) but contrasts that of Baniya & Thapa (2017) carried out in Nepal. Adequate facilities in a hotel can trigger leisure guests' choice of that hotel.

In our study, customer service influences consumer choice of hotels. This is consistent with the findings of prior researches conducted on the subject matter (Dube & Renaghan, 1999; Lockyer 2005; Sohrabi et al., 2011; Otegbulu & Tenigbade, 2011; Kukoyi & Iwuagwu, 2015; Baniya & Thapa, 2017; Ilijevski, 2016; Dube, 2000; Venter de, 2018). Contrary to the present finding, Ali et al., (2021) found the opposite although in a dimension of customer service. The significant relationship between customer service and consumer choice of hotels as unraveled by the present study sheds light on a number policy and strategy direction in the area of hotel management. Hotel managers and owners should strive to provide an array of customer services to increase customer patronage.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In brief, hotel patronage for leisure should not be seen as indecent behavior but as an avenue to scintillate consumer sense of adventure and imagination and also help in boosting lifestyle and tourism in Nigeria and other climes. In other words, guests get value during their hotel stay and this contributes to national development. Moreover, facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. Therefore, hotels should keep improving their facilities and services to attract guests and compete favorably in the industry. More importantly, hoteliers should make available basic and special facilities to satisfy customers. Provision should be made for regular electricity, regular water supply, restaurant, pool, relaxing lounge, bar, gym facilities and other facilities that make the guest's stay at the hotel memorable. Also, hotel managers and owners should provide an array of services to leisure guests in an efficient, courteous, polite and sympathetic manner. Moreover, the Nigeria Tourism Development Commission (NTDC) should ensure that hotel owners and managers provide basic hotel facilities, and hotel services provided as ordered and prompt. Finally, the NTDC should establish facilities and services benchmarks and hotels that break the rule penalized in this regard. This will no doubt serve as a deterrent to hotel operators with the concomitant benefit of countering competition, provision of memorable experience for the guests, and above all, making guests leave positive feedback on their stay.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the survey instrument of data collection for this study is valid and reliable, the sample size is small when compared with the total number of leisure guests that patronize hotels in Awka metropolis. Thus, the opinion of the sample may not reflect the opinion of the entire population of hotel leisure guests in Awka. A bigger random sample of leisure guests should be employed to construct and test the model in the near future.

The present study examined only two determinants of leisure guests choice of hotels. In consequence, future studies should include other important factors influencing consumer choice of hotels such as perception of security past experience image staff competence religion and traditional beliefs.

Finally, it will be worthwhile to validate the model in future research by ascertaining the views of hotel managers regarding the importance of facilities and customer service on leisure guests' choice of hotels to find out their clean, competent, expert perspectives. In contrast, the present study focused on leisure guests viewpoint.

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