

Security Challenges for the Hotel Industry: Implications for Selected Hotels in Owerri, Nigeria

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This study investigates the security challenges of ten selected hotels in the metropolis of Owerri, Nigeria, and the effect on guest loyalty. A survey was conducted on 154 respondents using a structured instrument to elicit responses regarding the various physical, personnel, and system security aspects of the hotel industry. Relationships between the consequent variables were determined using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The result indicated a weak positive correlation ($r^2 = 0.270$) between security conditions and guest patronage ($p \leq 0.01$) while a weak positive correlation ($r^2 = 0.086$) was also identified between perceived guest security and the availability of informal businesses ($p \leq 0.281$) in the hotel. A lack of security collaboration among hotels located in the area, inadequate emergency exits, and poor internal security were also indicated. The study recommends a balance between the provision of adequate security and guest privacy, bearing in mind the aggravation guests may feel in the event of an invasion of privacy.

Keywords: guest loyalty, guest relations, guest satisfaction, hotel industry, hotel security

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Introduction

Security has long been recognised as a necessity for the overall growth and development of the hotel industry, both in developed and developing societies. This growing recognition has led to the commitment of most hotel enterprises towards strengthening their security systems in terms of advanced security arrangements to ensure increased confidence on the part of hotel investors, employees, and guests, who form the core elements that foster industry development. In the previous decade, the hotel industry has played a prominent role in the development of Nige-

ria's economy with tourism capacity building, provision for employment and cultural rebirth (Onugha, Ibem, & Aderonmu, 2016; Obiora & Nwokorie, 2018), and is regarded as one of the fastest growing sectors in Nigeria's economy, equivalent to the communications sector (Bankole, 2002; Onugha et al., 2016). This, therefore, implies that the conditions necessary for the overall sustainability of the business as a key player in Nigeria's economic growth should not be under-emphasised.

However, most hotels in major cities and state capitals in Nigeria still grapple with the reality of insecure

situations within the business environment in relation to emerging security trends in the tourism sector. For instance, Nwokorie (2017) wrote that while hotel security technology is moving into the cybersecurity sector, with an eye on customer data protection, physical security and awareness remain crucial to the safety of hotel guests. Even when hotels have strong security policies and procedures in place, they are still vulnerable to cyber-attacks, break-ins, theft, fraud, and other crimes. Consequently, it is vital to take precautionary measures and continually evaluate security programmes. Nwokorie, Everest, and Ojo (2014) also saw that one major problem that affects the development of the hotel industry is the unfavourable government stance concerning its lack of policy development on tourism security, which should be treated as an essential condition for the success of the hospitality business. The government, at the state level, is usually uninterested in the size of private organisations set up in relation to the provision of all-round security for such businesses, mainly because security is exclusively under the aegis of the legislative authority of the central government (Nwokorie et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, the hotel industry has been a great source of revenue to the government through value-added tax (VAT) and similar revenue collections but without the government necessarily providing most of the social services required for successful business operations (Khemani, 2001). Most hotel establishments resort to the services of private security outfits to improve guest confidence (Maranga, 2015; Cebekhulu, 2016), thus forcing an increase in the cost of hotel products and services, thereby significantly affecting the customer loyalty of the hotel industry (Nwokorie, 2016).

Again, there is an emerging trend of increased competition among hotels in Owerri as a result of concentrating hotel business in a particular location within the city. Hotels everywhere in the state's capital indicate that the business has overextended itself, resulting in too many available rooms relative to the guests' desire to rent them. The result of this business concentration is the undue attraction of security risks to the business area, which is triggered by the inevitable visibility of different types of guests, including

VIPs and celebrities, who are likely to form part of the customer base of these hotels (Nwokorie et al., 2014). Hotel businesses are equally expected to improve the wellbeing of the local people through the provision of indirect employment opportunities for the local population, as part of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development practice (Nwokorie & Obiora, 2018). Judging from the perceived unemployment rate within the state, it is expected that local individuals may take undue advantage of this situation to commit crimes on unsuspecting guests within the business location (Khadka, 2014). This could compromise the reputation of the affected establishment, especially when there is a lack of security collaboration among the nearby hotel businesses (Nwokorie, et al., 2014) as is the case with the majority of hotel businesses in crime-affected areas. Specifically, Adebayo and Adebayo (2015) wrote that guest insecurity has scared tourists from visiting Maiduguri, Nigeria, over the previous decade, which led to a drastic reduction of guest patronage of small and medium hotels in the area. Similarly, Akpan (2017) determined that cult activities led to a staggering decline in the patronage of hospitality products and services, in Idah, Nigeria, in 2016 with the resultant loss of jobs that occasioned the collapse of the affected businesses.

The myriad of social challenges for the industry in Owerri has been compounded by the decline in the number of accessible roads to most hotel locations in the capital in recent times. Personal observations have proven that the condition of most of the roads linking the state's capital, through inland roads to hotel business locations with neighbouring states, have deteriorated. This situation could dampen the confidence of inbound visitors from a global point of view (Delena, 2010), thus painting a picture of a total collapse of the social system within the state capital. Also, poor accessibility to hotel locations may pose a problem for both internal and external security collaboration, as human traffic and crowd control seem to have been poorly managed.

Statement of Problem

To a large extent, security challenges facing the hotel industry could expose guests to many risks, mak-

ing them dissatisfied with hotel services, and could create a high level of customer turnover, thus forcing many hotels out of business. In Owerri particularly, where over 200 hotels are presently established, the deplorable social/security situation in the last three years makes survival for the hotel businesses difficult. Specifically, most hotels struggle to remain in the business as a result of obvious security threat caused by the level of business activities within hotel premises offering direct and indirect employment to the populace. Also, the provision of indirect employment in the hotel industry for the local population has been abused and used as a ploy to commit covert crimes in the hotel, thereby worsening security situations within the business environment.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate challenges for hotels in ensuring guest security, and the effect on guest satisfaction and loyalty in selected hotel establishments in Owerri. Specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the relationship between guest security and guest loyalty in the selected hotels.
2. Identify the relationship between the availability of informal businesses and guest security in the selected hotels.

Research Questions

The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. What is the relationship between guest security and guest loyalty for the hotel industry?
2. What is the relationship between the availability of informal businesses and guest security in the hotel industry?

Study Significance

This study was conducted among selected hotels in Owerri, Nigeria, to determine the security challenges facing these hotels and their relationship with respect to overall guest satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately determines the organisational efficiency of hotel businesses. It is expected that the outcome of this study will provide insight into the security and social

challenges of the hotel industry in preparing industry personnel and operators for the challenges ahead of time. The study will assist the government, at all levels, in policy formulation and implementation in the area of providing security assistance to hotels for sustainable tourism development, especially in times of civil disturbances. The hotel strategic planner will also benefit from the study in the idea of incorporation of security facilities in the scheme of the business for immediate or future business success. Researchers in hospitality development will equally benefit from this study as it will further create a new direction of how to mitigate security challenges facing the hotel industry.

Literature Review

Hotel security is a long-established concept that is instrumental to the success of the hotel business from a global perspective. Security in the hotel industry entails protection from all forms of harm, not only to hotel guests and their properties but to hotel employees and its host community at large (Groeneboom & Jones, 2003). Most assets and stakeholders of the business could be vulnerable as a result of the risks associated with it (Bharwani & Mathews, 2012). The economic implications of the business, however, pose sufficient reason for security not to be neglected (Cedric, 2011).

For the local hotel industry (Adepoju, 2017, p. 4):

[...] the provision of sufficient employee and guest services (including security) has been challenging for hotel operators who are not adequately prepared for a turn down – whether in terms of the quality of the hotel services rendered, strong revenue management strategies or the diversification of their demand markets.

The same holds for reductions in guests' confidence even when these demands have been met (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). However, for investors who truly intend to be mid-to-long-term players, hotel security is simply part of the cycle that creates myriad investment opportunities in the hotel industry (Adepoju, 2017).

Khadka (2014) wrote that hotel employees might

not even be aware of the risks that some guests may bring with them during their stay. This requires the hotel establishment to be vigilant at all times. The hotel is an aspect of the service industry in which security is an aspect of service. It is noteworthy, also, that a hotel with excellent products and service provision but inadequate security would diminish guests' safety, thus exposing them to the risks of crime and compromise the goodwill and reputation of the establishment.

Aspects of Hotel Security

Security in the hotel industry has a variety of aspects. Chakravarti (2011) identified the physical aspects of security, which is further divided into internal and external security, which deals with theft, fire hazards, lightning and escape routes, the safety of assets, unwanted visitors, and physical monitoring both inside and within the hotel premises.

The security aspect of persons identified by Nwokorie (2017) is of two parts: employees and guests, which include effective recruitment and selection, staff identification, key control, red tag system training and locker inspection for employees. For guests, baggage is supposed to be checked, guests who are suspected of stealing hotel property are supposed to be charged according to hotel policy, while guestroom security should be improved (Chakravarti, 2011; Nwokorie, 2017). The security aspect of systems in the hotel industry is as important as the first two. Chakravarti (2011) and Nwokorie (2017) identified them as including all established policies and procedures for the flow of work, which have to be followed alongside the required equipment used in carrying out operations and prescribed tasks in the various departments concerned. The security aspect of food and beverages is associated with the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) guidelines in line with local and national food hygiene regulations (Nwokorie, 2017; Chandra, 2017). Nwokorie (2017) advised that to forestall possible incidents that could lead to loss of customer goodwill for the hotel, such as rodent invasion, as well as food spoilage and poisoning, local hotels in Nigeria should be regularly inspected by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to ensure that hotel

establishments comply with prescribed food hygiene and safety standards.

Security Collaboration for Hotels

Khadka (2014) posited that the establishment or maintenance of a sufficient degree of safety and confidence of customers and employees is the aim of the work, structures, and processes known as 'security.' It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation, or organisation. Security, as a condition, is the degree of resistance to or protection from harm. The main function of the hotel security system, according to Negi and Manohar (2011) is to safeguard guests' and employees' lives and their property and to guard the hotel's property. Moreover, the security department of the hotel is responsible for the overall security of the building, in-house guests, visitors, day users, and employees of the hotel (Khadka, 2014). The critical points for consideration in hotel security include the prevention of theft and pilferage by employees and guests, the avoidance of intentional waste by employees, and the development of emergency plans for the protection of employees and guests in the event of a civil disturbance (Negi & Manohar, 2011), as it is the moral and legal responsibility of a hotel to protect its employees, guests, and their property against threats posed by those with a conscious intent to harm them (Khadka, 2014).

Security collaborations for hotel organisations established within the same vicinity are therefore essential in this circumstance, owing to the proximity between these establishments. It is expected that guest traffic within the area would be increased at peak periods, due to increased guests' demand, which would also increase social activities and other informal guest services from the immediate external environment of the hotel industry that provide informal business services. Experience has shown when civil unrest erupted within hotel environments, and the internal security of the affected establishment lost control of the situation while waiting for state security agents to arrive, the affected hotel was at the mercy of hoodlums. In this context, security collaboration among hotels within the capital city remains vital in order to form some sort of surveillance to forestall possible civil disturbances that

could hamper personnel and guest safety (Nwokorie et al., 2014). As Khadka, (2014, p. 6) put it: 'Hotel staff may not even become aware of risks that some guests may bring with them; consequently, a hotel must be vigilant at all times.' The risk to hotels within the same location can also increase because of the identity of an individual guest or his or her family. VIPs, celebrities or the infamous can present unique difficulties. Apart from the possibility of death or injury and destruction, the adverse publicity from an incident can result in ruined reputations, failing business, and detrimental effects to tourism within the state and nation at large. Tourists and hotel guests want to feel safe and secure in their temporary home (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011), and hotels have a duty to protect them since the business depends upon them (Khadka, 2014; Nwokori et al., 2014).

Risk Factors for Poor Security

Khadka (2014) and Nwokorie et al. (2014) have listed some security factors for the hotel industry: blackmail of employees, invasion of (VIP) guest privacy by locals, press, and interest groups; fraud, baggage theft, room burglary, opportunistic robbery, robbery by organised crime, kidnapping, and terrorism. The major cause is poor hotel security, which could lead to risk factors for the hotel industry including effects of tourism on the region or country, adverse publicity of the incident, destruction, injury, possible loss of life, attacks, and prolonged civil unrest (Khadka, 2014; Adebayo & Adebayo, 2015; Onugha et al., 2016; Jasinskis, Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, & Simanavicius, 2016; Akpan, 2017). However, studies have not examined and determined the impact of security aspects for the hotel industry on guest satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately determines organisational efficiency for a given establishment. For instance, during the period of this study, a local newspaper vendor and phone accessory dealer were caught pilfering fuel from a storage facility in one of the hotels within the study area. The managers imagined a situation in which the incident went unnoticed with the energy manager's intent of having sufficient gas for energy supply in the event of a power outage in the short period of operation. The result could be an unpredictable period of lack of en-

ergy supply to guest rooms and production areas until more gas was purchased to generate energy. Such a situation could lead to the loss of goodwill from guests and subsequent loss of profit for the hotel, which may lead to a gradual business collapse. Therefore, the need to ensure guest loyalty through the provision of effective security services for the guest throughout their stay is relevant.

Other Conditions for Business Success

Guest Satisfaction

Hotel guests are becoming increasingly aware of the need for satisfaction as part of expectation while choosing hotel services. This is because: 'the hotel room becomes a sanctuary for the guest while he sleeps' (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011, p. 231). On the part of hotel managers, Mitrović (2017, p. 67) asserts that 'measuring the satisfaction of visitors to the hotel is the starting point in the planning and improvement of hotel services, and relationships with guests.' Dominici and Guzzo (2010, p. 3) viewed customer satisfaction as 'a business philosophy which tends to the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs.' Recent studies have determined that adequate security is significant to proper satisfaction management for the hotel guest (Pazir & Amin, 2015; Amfani-Joe, Bahagu, & Osagede, 2018; Onugha et al., 2016). This makes it imperative for hotels to understand the essence of improved guest security in order to enhance guest satisfaction.

Guest Loyalty

According to Gronholdt, Martensen, and Kristensen (2000), a significant link exists between guest satisfaction and guest loyalty. Onugha et al. (2016, p. 5797) wrote that: 'achieving customer satisfaction is a critical component of the hotel industry because improved satisfaction can lead to better customer experience and loyalty.' Rising loyalty among guests, according to Jasinskis et al. (2016, p. 562), 'allows the organization savings when decreasing marketing costs, transaction costs, and also the costs as the result of customers' decreasing change.' Guest loyalty entails the retention of existing guests to the extent of encouraging them,

through quality service delivery, which includes guest security, to attract new customers for the hotel through inexpensive means, like word-of-mouth adverts (Dominici & Guzzo, 2010).

Informal Businesses

These are indirect business investments operating within hotel establishments and owned by private individuals who are not part of the hotels where the businesses operate. These businesses have a way of causing social unrest in the short run due to lack of regulation and poor security verification. Kasim (2006, p. 5) wrote that 'a destination may lose its tourist appeal if there are social problems such as the commercialization of local cultures (which lead to the lowering of that culture's authenticity), increase in crime (from drugs/alcohol abuse and prostitution) and societal antagonism,' which may arise through informal trade in the hotel sector (Okafor, Nwokorie, & Akeredolu, 2010). Examples of informal business activities include but are not limited to sales of local food products, cultural attire, artefacts, jewellery and beads, phone accessories and recharge cards, books and retail items as well as the operation of taxicabs and travel agencies. It is noteworthy that the majority of these informal business owners are between 18 and 40 years (Obiora & Nwokorie, 2018).

Methodology

Generally, the study focused on security issues and challenges facing hotels in Owerri, but with specific reference to ten selected ones. The delimitation of the scope is in recognition of security challenges of the hotel industry. In terms of respondents, customers and employees of the selected establishments were included. In investigating the behaviours and opinions of the respondents, the study used the survey method, which necessitated the use of a questionnaire (for data collection over a period of 14 months: March 2017 to April 2018) due to both the number of respondents and nature of the study. The range of the data collection was to ensure responses from the sample cut across the various business seasons within the local business period (peak and off-peak).

Population and Sample Size

The determination of the study population is based on the accessibility of respondents that granted access for questionnaire administration. In other words, the convenience sampling method was adopted, and the determination of the sample size is based on the study population comprising 131 guests and 169 customer contact hotel employees (300). It is noteworthy that both strata of the sample showed reasonable understanding of the research background and proposed items in the research instrument during FGD (Focus Group Discussion), thus necessitating the placing of their responses in the same pool. The Taro Yamane formula, as given by Yamane (1967), is applied to arrive at a sample size of 171.

Data Collection and Analyses

The questionnaire was designed in a four-point Likert scale of 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' which stand for a positive response, as well as 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' which stand for a negative response. In designing the questionnaire, the researchers were cognisant of the perceived determinants of the security performance of hotels expected from guests (as observed during FGD). Other guest security-related issues in the questionnaire regarding guest satisfaction and guest loyalty were adopted from previous studies, including those of Bankole (2002), Groenenboom and Jones (2003), Nwokorie (2016), Onugha et al. (2016), Akpan, (2017), Nwokorie and Ezeibe (2016), Chauhan, Shukla, and Negi (2018), Bharwani and Mathews (2012), Nwokorie et al. (2014), Amfani-Joe et al. (2018), Hilliard and Baloglu (2008), Maranga (2015), Obiora and Nwokorie (2018), Okafor et al. (2010).

The instrument was administered to sample to be completed at their convenience. The responses were analysed in inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 23) while the null hypotheses formulated for the study were tested for correlation at 0.05 level of significance (95.0% confidence interval) using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The decision rule is to accept the hypothesis if $p\text{-value} \geq 0.05$; otherwise, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1 Validity and Reliability of Statistics (%)

Cronbach's α	No. of items	Result
0.967	22*	Reliable

Notes * The 18 items in the questionnaire, plus four demographic attributes of respondents not presented in Table 3.

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated in relation to the consequent variables of the research problem to determine if relationships between these variables exist.

- H1 *There is no relationship between guest security and guest loyalty in the hotel industry.*
- H2 *There is no relationship between the availability of informal businesses and perceived guest security in the hotel industry.*

Results and Discussion

Results of post-data analyses show that out of the 171 questionnaires (100% effective sample size) distributed, 154 were returned, representing a 90.1% return rate of the research instrument. The gender distribution of respondents was recorded at 55.2% (85) in favour of the male gender, while the remaining 44.8% (69) are females. All the respondents are above 18 years of age and are formally educated.

The validity and reliability test for the research instrument shows the consistency of the responses contained in the instrument. Cronbach's α value is greater than 0.8, thus suggesting a high consistency in the responses to the questions (Guilford & Benjamin, 1978) to signify that the research instrument is reliable (Table 1). Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents among the hotel establishments studied, indicating the population of guests and customer contact employees based on usable questionnaires. Customer contact employees (CCE) made up to 48.05% of the respondents, and 51.95% of the respondents are hotel guests (HG). While designing the research instrument, statements directed to either target group of the respondents or a combination of both target groups were indicated to elicit responses as appropriate, as indicated in Table 3 (n74, n80, and n154 for CCE, HG, and TSS, respectively).

Table 2 Target Groups of the Respondents

Hotel	(1)	(2)	(3)
A	5 (3.24)	7 (4.55)	12 (7.79)
B	9 (5.84)	10 (6.49)	19 (12.33)
C	7 (4.55)	6 (3.90)	13 (8.45)
D	6 (3.90)	7 (4.55)	13 (8.45)
E	7 (4.55)	7 (4.55)	14 (9.10)
F	7 (4.55)	8 (5.19)	15 (9.74)
G	9 (5.84)	10 (6.49)	19 (12.33)
H	8 (5.19)	6 (3.90)	14 (9.10)
I	10 (6.49)	10 (6.49)	20 (12.98)
J	6 (3.90)	9 (5.84)	15 (9.74)
Total	74 (48.05)	80 (51.95)	154 (100)*

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) customer contact employees, (2) hotel guests, (3) total sample size.

* Insignificant decimal due to approximation (Egbulonu, 2001).

This enabled a justification of the responses, thus influencing the research outcome. Of the 18 statements in the research instrument, three (16.70) were indicated for responses by CCE, six (33.30%) were indicated for HG, and nine (50.0%) were indicated for both target groups jointly (TSS) as indicated in Table 3. As stated earlier, these statements were adopted from previous studies, and they are reliable indicators of security performances of hotel establishments.

Findings

Responses from the sample in relation to various aspects of hotel security, which are indicative of the level of provision of security services in the selected establishments, are presented in Table 3. Over 77% of respondents attested that guests' properties are kept at their owners' risk: an indication that guests may not have confidence in security within the hotel garage. Cases of car tampering within the hotel premises received a positive response of 46.4%, which is considerably high. This shows that car park security is discouraging to a large extent and may negatively affect the guest evaluation of a hotel's functional quality of its service (Jasinskis et al., 2016). Also, the issue of tampered guests' vehicles could also cast a shadow of

Table 3 Analysis of Agreement and Disagreement Responses

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Properties kept at owners' risk (n154)	77.9	22.1	3.06	0.62
2	Cases of car tampering have been recorded (n80)	63.6	36.4	2.82	0.58
3	Poor road quality affecting hotel accessibility (n80)	77.9	22.1	3.09	0.63
4	Inadequate key control (n154)	77.3	22.7	2.98	0.61
5	Provision of night lighting (n80)	21.4	78.6	1.95	0.62
6	Cases of room break-ins (n80)	66.3	33.7	2.79	0.58
7	Low guest patronage (n154)	78.0	22.0	3.11	0.64
8	Security conditions affect guests' stay (n154)	75.4	24.6	3.01	0.61
9	Current civil demonstrations affecting hotel business (n154)	70.8	29.2	2.90	0.59
10	Invasion of hotel premises by local residents (n74)	77.9	22.1	3.08	0.63
11	Availability of informal businesses (n154)	63.7	36.3	2.92	0.60
12	Invasion by rodents (n80)	75.3	24.7	2.95	0.60
13	Security collaboration among hotels in the area (n74)	14.9	85.1	1.82	0.62
14	Perceived guest security (n154)	82.5	17.5	3.21	0.66
15	Regular energy and water supply (n80)	63.7	36.3	2.85	0.59
16	Availability of internal security system (n74)	22.0	78.0	1.19	0.86
17	Availability of banking services within the hotel area (n154)	63.7	36.3	2.91	0.59
18	Availability of fire alarm and emergency exit route (n154)	36.4	63.6	2.17	0.58

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) serial number, (2) statements, (3) positive response (%), (4) negative response (%), (5) mean, (6) standard deviation.

doubt on guests' property security by the hotel. Lack of access roads to the hotel environment has a response of 77.9% to attest to the difficulty in accessing the location, while inadequate key control recorded up to 77.3% responses. Chauhan et al. (2018) indicated that emergency illness and life-threatening situations may arise, requiring rapid response from hotel authorities. Such rapid response could be hampered by poor accessibility from the hotel location.

As many as 78.6% respondents are negative on the provision of adequate night lighting outside the hotel building, which is an important safety attribute for customer choice of hotels (Hilliard & Baloglu, 2008), while 66.3% of the respondents agreed that cases of room break-ins had been recorded. Low guest patronage received 78.0% positive responses, and 75.4% of the respondents agreed that security conditions affect whether guests stay in the hotels (Table 3). Worthy of note are the studies (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011; Mu-

biri, 2016), which indicated guest wellbeing and safety as encouraging guest patronage, and also a strength in the SWOT analysis of hotels.

Respondents also attested that the current civil demonstrations in the state capital were affecting the hotel business (70.8%), rodent invasions affecting guest comfort has 75.3% responses in agreement, and security collaboration among hotels in the study area has 85.1% negative responses (Table 3). Alanzeh (2017) indicated hygiene factors as having a significant impact on guest perception towards guest safety in hotels, while Chauhan et al. (2018) suggested that hotels should design a crisis management plan that would ensure coordination with local administration and security authorities to forestall emergencies. A lack of these security aspects has been identified in this study, even with the existence of informal business operators who are indirect employees of the hotel establishments, as confirmed by 63.7% of the respondents.

Table 4 H1 Correlations

Item		(1)	(2)
(1) Security conditions	(a)	1	0.270**
	(b)		0.001
	(c)	154	154
(2) Low guest patronage	(a)	0.270**	1
	(b)	0.001	
	(c)	154	154

Notes Row headings are as follows: (a) Pearson correlation, (b) significance (2-tailed), (c) *n*. ** Correlation (r^2) is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

While 63.7% of the respondents confirmed that water and energy supplies are available, 82.5% of the responses attested that guests are not safe in the hotels studied since the availability of internal security system, access to the banking system within the hotel environment, and emergency exit routes have 22.0%, 63.7%, and 36.4% responses respectively (Table 3) which are not encouraging for guest security. Hilliard and Baloglu (2008) determined that three dimensions of security attributes are necessary for the hotel industry. These include visible security features, like fire alarms and exit routes, documentation and staff training, and general security features like back-up energy supply, which are all indicated in the present study.

A Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine if a relationship between security conditions and guest patronage in the hotels exists. The result shows that r^2 is statistically significant and positive at 0.270, which identifies a weak positive correlation between the variables (Table 4). The mean and standard deviation for security conditions, and low guest patronage of 3.01 and 0.61; 3.11 and 0.64, respectively, were also identified. The *p*-value for correlation is 0.001, which is less than the significance value of 0.05. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is rejected. This implies that there is a relationship between guest security and guest loyalty in the hotel industry.

For H2, a Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine whether a relationship exists between guests' perceived security and availability of informal

Table 5 H2 Correlations

Item		(1)	(2)
(1) Availab. of informal businesses	(a)	1	0.086
	(b)		0.281
	(c)	154	154
(2) Perceived guest security	(a)	0.086	1
	(b)	0.281	
	(c)	154	154

Notes Row headings are as follows: (a) Pearson correlation, (b) significance (2-tailed), (c) *n*. ** Correlation (r^2) is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

businesses in the hotels. The result indicates that r^2 is statistically significant at 0.086, which shows a weak positive correlation between perceived guests' security and availability of informal businesses within the selected hotels. The *p*-value for correlation is 0.281, which is greater than 0.05 significance value (Table 5). The mean and the standard deviation were also identified for the availability of informal business (2.92 and 0.60, respectively) and perceived guest safety (3.21 and 0.66, respectively); therefore, hypothesis H2 is accepted. This suggests there is no relationship between guests' perceived security and the availability of informal businesses in the hotel industry. As the evidence against the null hypothesis is weak, there seems to be no guarantee of guest security from operators of informal businesses within the hotel premises.

From the result of the research, in relation to the research questions, the rejection of H1 implies an existing relationship between guest security and guest loyalty. Therefore, guest loyalty is likely if guest security is guaranteed to a reasonable extent. This implication is that hotels would maximise guest loyalty for business success if guest security is enhanced, because guests feel satisfied and offer repeat transactions where security is certain. Conversely, accepting H2 entails that the availability of informal businesses in the hotel premises is not an assurance to the security of guests' properties, as informal business operators could be a threat to hotel security. The relationship between the availability of informal businesses and guest security is not mutual due to the threat posed

to hotels' and guests' properties by informal business operators.

Conclusion

This study was aimed to investigate the various security challenges of the hotel industry in Owerri, Nigeria, with particular reference to the impact on overall guest safety and guest loyalty. The study was able to justify the intent with various findings to validate that guest security in the study area is at its low ebb. The study observed that vehicles parked within hotel premises are entirely vulnerable to theft. Even though hotel establishments have no (legal) mandate to provide guest vehicle security, incidents of vehicle tampering recorded within hotel premises could be enough to diminish the hotel's goodwill to a large extent.

Reactions from respondents also confirmed cases of room break-ins in the establishments studied, which may be occasioned by poor internal security. Since the hotel premises are being invaded by local residents (in form of informal guest service providers), cases of this nature cannot be entirely avoided. Rodent invasion, as indicated in the study, is another critical security risk that may unknowingly affect food safety and, consequently, guests' health. Inadequate night lighting is an indicated security aspect that gives rise to similar vicious security situations.

The deplorable nature of roads leading to the hotels is a major guest security impediment, especially in terms of emergencies and external security collaboration. These situations are contributors to the customer decision process while making destination choice; they may significantly hinder the growth of the tourism industry in the state in the near future.

Correlation analyses identified a relationship between guest security and guest loyalty, as the study indicated that security conditions affect guest loyalty. Similarly, the study also identified that the availability of informal businesses does not guarantee guest security. This could be because the informal business operators are not direct employees of the hotel; their commitment to guests in terms of security is not sacrosanct.

Previous studies (Jasinskis et al., 2016; Chauhan et al., 2018; Hilliard & Baloglo, 2008; O'Fallon & Ruther-

ford, 2011; Mubiri, 2016; Alananzeh, 2017) identified security risks as unfavourable to business success in the hotel industry as it concerns guest satisfaction and loyalty. This could be brought about by a neglect of the various physical features, persons, and the system security aspects indicated in this study.

For first-time guests in the hotel, poor security could undermine their satisfaction level and the chances of the hotel getting repeat business from them even though they have no previous experience with the hotel (Högnäs, 2015). The negative impact of a poor first impression could be damaging to the service quality of a hotel, as identified in previous studies (Högnäs, 2015; Amelia & Garg, 2016). It should be understood that poor security could affect the guest's first impression, as Högnäs (2015, p. 8) wrote: 'the first impression of a hotel experience is affected by many things such as surroundings, interior, and employees,' and that 'previous experiences and expectations also affect the total perceived service quality' (p. 13).

Limitations

The findings of this study may not be summarised as a general situation obtainable in most state capitals in the country. This is due, mainly, to inadequate available local literature to compare hotel security situations in most major cities in the country to a larger extent. Further research could be necessitated, especially in regions where security conditions seem to have either improved or deteriorated further.

Recommendation

From the findings of this study, hotels should review their guest vehicle parking policy to accommodate the interest of both parties, bearing in mind the confidence reposed in the hotel by the guest. Absolute security of guests' vehicle could be achieved by enhancing security at the car park area, providing vehicle parking tags, and adequate night lighting as necessitated by contemporary security situations that require due diligence.

Hotel security goes beyond the installation of the latest surveillance equipment. Staff should be made to undergo regular training on the usage of these devices to regularly ensure guest satisfaction and be reminded

that guest privacy is also important both in the service encounter and security mix.

Hotels should thrive to ensure a balance between guest privacy and security while providing lighting and various security arrangements, bearing in mind the aggravation customers may feel in the event of privacy invasion. Therefore, night lighting outside the hotel building should be adequate to discourage suspicious movements during late hours. However, caution should be applied, so that night lighting is not reflected into guest rooms unnecessarily by providing quality curtain materials.

To meet guest expectations and enhance guest loyalty, hotels should create a sustainable feedback mechanism to obtain information from guests to enable them to understand the feeling of first time guests (especially), in order to understand and capture their perception of initial and overall service quality including hotel security, and fulfil them for a repeat business.

Security collaboration among hotels located within the same vicinity is essential to prevent coordinated theft that could arise, especially during festive periods. It is easier for a hotel security system to manage crisis situations and or send an early report to police authorities for rapid response against crimes if intelligence is received promptly from the nearby hotel establishment of an imminent attack by hoodlums.

Hotel business operators should consider extending hospitality business development to other parts of the state, rather than concentrating the business in a particular cluster of the state capital. This would help in spreading hospitality-related businesses to other areas and also minimise the security threat that may arise as a result of huge guest traffic generated during peak periods in locations with a large number of hotels.

The government also has an enormous role to play for tourism to grow. While it is expected that government should improve security around business establishments who pay tax for the purpose, effort should also be put in place by the government to construct and maintain access roads to hotel establishments in order to enhance the capacity of these hotels to attract inbound tourists and other business investors.

Regular inspection should be enforced by regula-

tory agencies in the hotel industry in order to check that hotels maintain standards in all aspects of security (physical, food and beverage, persons, and systems).

Though informal businesses could assist hotel establishments in meeting guests' ongoing needs, hotels should ensure prescribed registration for informal business operators both with the hotel and affiliate professional associations prior to the commencement of business so that the operators would understand they are part of the business' success and they should protect guests' interest as much as the hotels do.

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