Facilities, Customer Service and Leisure Guests' Choice of Hotels: The View from Hotel Managers' Side

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ABSTRACT: *A survey of 84 hotel managers in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria was conducted in January and February, 2024 to test a model of consumer choice of hotels developed by Ogbunankwor and colleagues in 2023 in which two factors (facilities and customer service) predict consumer choice of hotels. Multiple regression analysis was employed to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of SPSS Version 20.0 software at 5% level of significance. Findings indicate that the two factors tested, namely facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. More importantly, customer service has more influence than facilities. As a result, this finding contradicts previous research executed from a guests' perspective by Ogbunankwor and colleagues in 2023 that found facilities to have more influence than customer service. That is to say, this study is a confirmation that hotel managers do not totally understand their guests. Although the model achieved a good fit, future research is needed to validate the model in other perspectives and future research is also needed to develop a comprehensive model of consumer choice of hotels. Implications for global and particularly Nigerian industry stakeholders are discussed.*

KEYWORDS: facilities, customer service, leisure guests, choice, hotel, managers

INTRODUCTION

The early to mid-20th Century is considered as a milestone in the timeline of the global hospitality industry. Of course, this period marked the beginning of modern hospitality era as a lot of giant hotel chains started doing their business (Russell & Dawson, 2022). For instance, in the year 1919, Cornard Hilton opened his first hotel in Texas and later on, also bought the

Ellsworth Statler's chain of hotels in the year 1954 (Russell & Dawson, 2022). In addition, Marriot (est. 1927), Sheraton (est. 1937) and Hyatt (est. 1957) also emerged as giant players in the industry (Russell & Dawson, 2022). At the same time, Kemmon Wilson started Holiday Inn series of hotels and inns by establishing the first Holiday Inn in the year 1952 and the Holiday group went on to build its 1000th Holiday Inn in the year 1968 (Russell & Dawson, 2022). With these developments, the industry became more and more competitive than ever. Interestingly, these 20th Century hoteliers tapped into the opportunity created by innovations in transportations that enabled more and more people to travel and incorporated more and more amenities and services in their hotel establishments besides establishing new chains. These they did in a bid to outdo or beat competitors and also have a reasonable share of the market. As a result, the hospitality industry particularly the hotel sector has evolved to become what we see in the present day.

Apparently, the future of hospitality and tourism appears brighter. For instance, the market size, measured by revenue, of the global hotels and resorts industry was $1.5 trillion in 2023 and this had grown 1.1 percent per year on average between 2018 and 2023 and had a growth rate of 5 percent in 2023 alone (IBIS World, 2024a). Similarly, the global hotel and resorts industry has 682,000 businesses in 2024 paying $332.2 billion in wages to 8 million employees and revenue reached an estimated $1.6 trillion (IBIS World, 2024b). To be more precise, the United States (US) is expected to generate the most revenue in the hotels market, with a projected revenue of US$110,500 million in 2024 (Statistica, 2024). Moreover, contextual information from this developed country reveal that about 1.6 million people are employed in the hotel accommodation industry and the average US hotel occupancy rate is 67 percent as of August 2022 (McCain, 2022). In addition, there are 90, 562 hotel and motel businesses in the US, approximately 5.29 million hotel rooms in the US, and the US hotel and motel industry are worth $177.6 billion (McCain, 2022).

In comparison, in a developing country context like Nigeria, it is projected that the revenue of the hotels market will reach US$1.52 billion by 2024 and it is expected to show an annual growth rate of 4.46 percent during the period of 2024 – 2028, ultimately resulting in a projected market volume of US$1.81 billion by 2028 (Statistica, 2024). In the same way, the number of users in the hotels market is also expected to increase, reaching 18.93 million users by 2028 with user penetration rate in the country predicted to increase from 6.9 percent in 2024 to 7.5 percent by 2028 (Statistica, 2024). Interestingly, the mentioned statistics at the global, developed country and developing country contexts appear rosy for the hospitality and tourism industry especially the hotel industry. in consequence, hotels of different categories continue to flourish locally, nationally and globally in the current economic climate.

Statement of the Problem
Unfortunately, notwithstanding that hotel businesses are thriving in the present economic climate, there are still the problems of unavailability of basic facilities in some hotels, poor facility management plan and high operating and maintenance costs of facilities in some hotels in Nigeria. However, Nedolisa and Egolum (2019) attribute some of these problems to unprofessional hiring of facilities manager. More importantly, maintenance of hotel facilities

has been identified as a major issue in hotel management in Nigeria (Babatunde, 2016). Besides facilities concerns, there are problems of customer service in the Nigerian hotel setting in the form of poor handling of guests' complaints, poor guest feedback mechanism, poor monitoring and evaluation of the customer service programme, poor staff attitude towards guests, high rate of service failure, inability to utilize adequate technology to serve guests, and failure to personalize guest experience. This scenario in the hospitality business in Nigeria is also attributed to high employee turnover, poor employee attitude to work in the form of absenteeism and nonchalance and low levels of education of employees (see Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2016). In consequence, guests in Nigeria do not have excellent value for money spent in lodging. More importantly, when the expectations of a large number of guests do not match with hotel performance, these negatively impacts the revenue figures, occupancy rates, industry growth rate and guest statistics. Conversely, it is not empirically established if facilities and customer services provided by hoteliers in Nigeria influence leisure guests' choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective. To discover or prove the facts of the situation, we empirically test the structural model of consumer choice of hotels developed by Ogbunankwor, Nwangene and Chendo (2023a) in which two factors (facilities and customer service) predict consumer choice of hotels.

Interestingly, several empirical studies have been conducted in different countries of the world to understand leisure guests' choice of hotels from a consumer perspective (e.g., Tsaur & Gwo-Hshiung, 1995; Sohrabi, Vanani, Tahmasebipur & Fazli, 2011; Kucukusta, 2017; Baniya & Thapa, 2017; Soulidou, Karavasilis, Kehris, Theocharidis & Alberto, 2018). Likewise, very limited research has been conducted on leisure guests' choice of hotels in Nigeria from a consumer perspective (e.g., Ogbunankwor, Chendo & Nwangene, 2022; Ogbunankwor, Nwangene & Chendo, 2023a; Ogbunankwor, Nwangene & Chendo, 2023b). On the other hand, a number of empirical studies executed in different countries of the world have incorporated hotel manager's perceptions of guests' choice of hotels from five focuses. For instance, a few of these studies focused on the perceptions of hotel managers alone (e.g., Narula, Hussain, Kaushik & Demicco, 2022). Also, some studies directed their attention on the perceptions of guests and hotel managers (e.g., Cetin & Walls, 2015). Moreover, others studied the perceptions of employees/staff, the managers inclusive (e.g., Hussain & Khana, 2015). Yet, some other studies examined the perceptions of staff and guests (e.g., Obeke & Abugu, 2021). Finally, comparative studies involving guests' and hotel managers' perceptions also exist in the context of determinants of guests' choice of hotels (e.g., Lockyer, 2002; Chan & Lam, 2013; Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020). Apparently, only a few Nigerian studies (e.g., Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Obeke & Abugu, 2021) incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of studies that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels executed according to market segments (leisure guests, transient business travelers, meeting and convention customers). As a result, this study attempts to bridge this gap in extant literature by examining the individual influence of two of the most highlighted factors influencing consumer choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective, that is, facilities and customer service. Moreover, these factors were originally tested in a structural model of consumer choice of hotels developed by Ogbunankwor et al (2023a). More importantly, these factors are suitable for helping us provide an empirically uncontroversial

evidence of what works in Nigeria in respect to leisure guests' choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective to ascertain their clean, competent, expert viewpoint.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this piece of research is to establish a model of leisure guests' choice of hotels in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria. In consequence, this objective can be broken down into the following particular objectives:

- To examine the extent to which facilities contribute to leisure guests' choice of hotels.

- To find out whether customer service has a significant effect on leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Significance of the Study

Of course, this study is justifiable economically, socially and academically. Firstly, the study is worthwhile because it will be beneficial to stakeholders in the hotel industry like hotel owners/investors, hotel managers, international hotel operators, white label management companies and consultants who need to take rational decisions to ensure profitability. Secondly, government agencies and local authorities will equally benefit from the results of this study, hence they will regulate better on consumer protection issues. Thirdly, the study will also be beneficial to leisure guests who patronize hotels and desire a comfortable and memorable stay. Finally, this study is considerable because there is relatively a dearth of studies that have examined the determinants of leisure guests' choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective. Therefore, the study will add to the stock of existing knowledge as well as act as a springboard for further research in this area of hospitality and tourism management thereby benefiting research scholars.

Scope of the Study

To begin with, in terms of content scope, the present study is domiciled within the domain of consumer behavior. At the same time, in terms of geographical scope, the study covers Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria. Finally, the unit of analysis in this study are leisure guests that patronize hotels for leisure, fun, enjoyment, good time, pleasure, relaxation or adventure.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework: Expectancy Theory of Motivation

The theoretical framework of the present study is developed based on the adaptation of the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, otherwise known as 'Expectancy Theory'. To begin with, Vroom (1964) first proposed the expectancy theory of motivation in his book on 'work and motivation' domiciled within the domain of organizational behavior. Originally, Expectancy Theory suggests that individuals are motivated to perform if they know that their extra performance is recognized and rewarded (Vroom, 1964). In other words, an individual will behave or act in a certain way because they are motivated to select a specific behavior over others due to what they expect the result of that behavior will be (Oliver, 1974). That is to say,

the central premise of the Expectancy Theory is that people make behavioral choices that are calculated to allow them to achieve desired outcomes (Vroom, 1964; Porter & Lawler, 1968). Therefore the Expectancy Theory assumes that an individual's behavior toward a task or activity is impacted on how confident they are that their activities will lead to the intended reward or goal (Lee, 2019). That is why Vroom (1964) defined motivation as a process governing choices among alternative forms of voluntary activities, a process controlled by the individual. Thus, the individual makes choices based on estimates of how well the expected results of a given behavior are going to match up with or eventually lead to the desired results (Vroom, 1964).

To be more precise, Vroom (1964) introduced three variables within the Expectancy Theory which are valence (V), expectancy (E) and instrumentality (I). The three elements are important behind choosing one element over another because they are clearly defined (Vroom, 1964). First, valence is the value an individual places on the rewards of an outcome, which is based on their needs, goals, values, and sources of motivation (Kroth, 2007). Second, expectancy is the belief that one's effort (E) will result in attainment of desired performance (P) goals and is usually based on an individual's past experience, self-confidence (self-efficacy), and the perceived difficulty of the performance standard or goal (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Thirdly, instrumentality is the belief that a person will receive a reward if the performance expectation is met and this reward may present itself in the form of a pay increase, promotion, recognition or sense of accomplishment (Vroom, 1964). Therefore, motivation is a product of the individual's expectancy that a certain effort will lead to the intended performance to achieve a certain result, and the desirability of this result for the individual, known as valence (Condrey, 2005).

Moreover, the expectancy theory of motivation has been applied in different contexts by several studies. The list includes the computer applications industry (Baker-Eveleth & Stone, 2008), accounting environment (Ferris, 1977), sales industry (Oliver, 1974; Pousa & Mathieu, 2010), educational sector (Brophy & Good, 1974; Brophy & Good, 1987; Holdford & Lovelace – Elmore, 2001; Unda & Ramos,2016) and the public sector (Suciu, Mortan & Lazar, 2013; Nimri, Bdair & Al Bitar, 2015). Also, the nonprofit organization sector (Zboja, Jackson & Grimes – Rose, 2020), tourism industry (Xuefeng, Zhenggang, Li, Qiang, Xusheng & Shuo, 2021) and particularly the hotel industry (Chiang & Jang, 2008; Barbosa-McCoy, 2016) have been studied by applying the expectancy theory of motivation. More importantly, several of these researches that employed the expectancy theory examined the perception of the ultimate consumers or customers (e.g., Lee, 2007; Chopra, 2020).

Regrettably, the expectancy theory has been criticized for being too simplistic in nature (Lawler & Suttle, 1973). Also, the theory does not provide specific suggestions on what motivates organizational members but instead provides a process of cognitive variables that reflects individual differences in work motivation (Lunenburg, 2011). Nevertheless, some critics have made adjustments to Vroom's model (e.g., Lawler & Porter, 1967; Porter & Lawler, 1968; Graen, 1969; Lawler, 1971; Lunenburg, 2011).
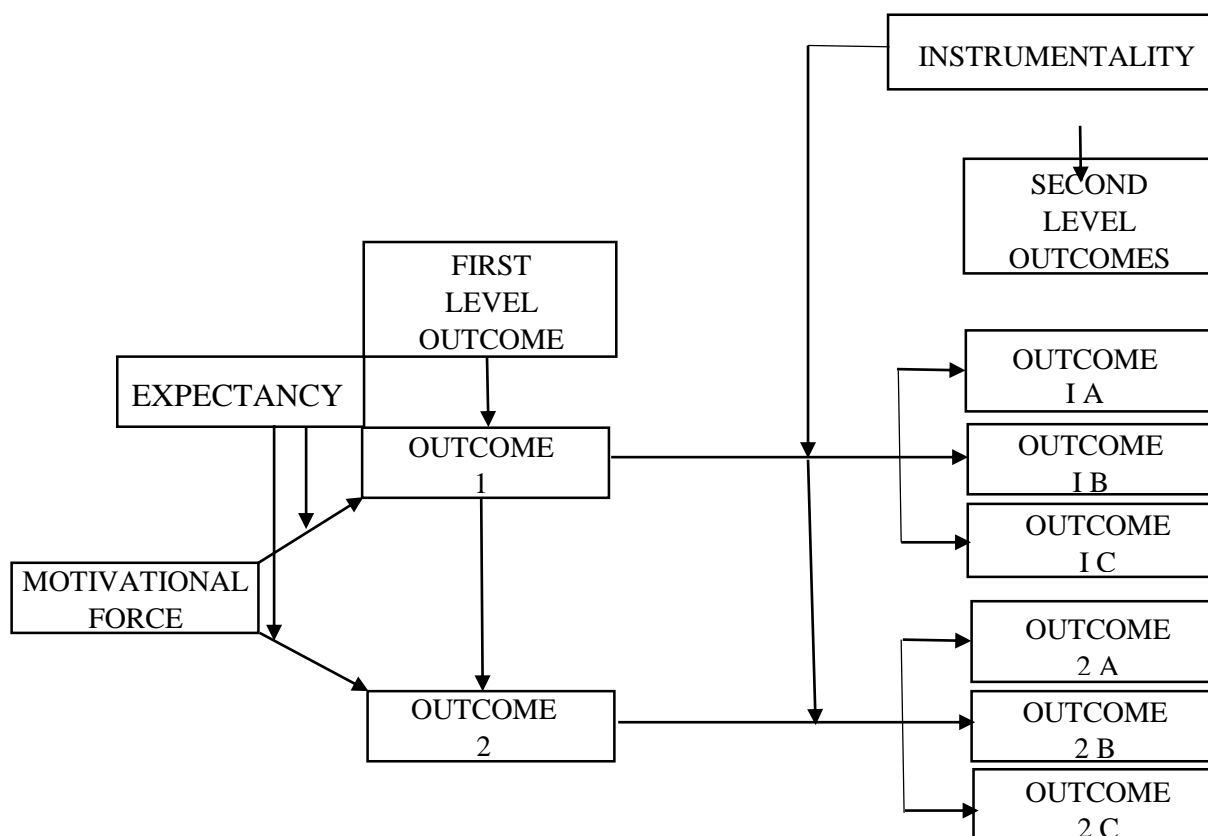
Fig 1. Vroom's expectancy theory schema (Sinha, 2023)

For the purpose of the present study, the application of the Expectancy Theory is as follows; firstly, the 'sources of motivation' or 'motivational forces' are represented by the facilities and customer service variables. Secondly, the outcome' or 'intended goal' or 'behavioural choice' is represented by choice of hotels. Moreover, the outcome in this study terminated at first level outcome and did not extend to second level outcome. More importantly, this study does not involve the workplace, particularly when it comes to motivation. Rather, the study attempts to develop and test a leisure guests' motivation model based on the expectancy theory because the behavior exhibited by consumers when buying and using economic goods and services remains an interesting field of study.

Of course, the expectancy model of motivation shown in Figure 1 is one of the notable hospitality theories used to understand the buying behavior of consumers. It provides specific suggestions on what motivates leisure guests in hotel selection. Assuredly, this theoretical framework explores the complex inter-relationships and interconnectedness of consumer behaviour and hospitality at a homogeneous group level.

Empirical Review
The thrust of this section is to review empirical studies executed in the area of determination of consumer choice of hotels. Since an avalanche of studies have been conducted from different perspectives that include leisure guests and hotel managers in different countries of the world, and even in Nigeria, there is every need to review these studies.

Previous Studies on Leisure Guests' Choice of Hotels
In fact, hospitality and tourism researchers have segmented the hotel market into three homogenous groups or segments: leisure guests, business travelers, and meeting and convention customers (Dube & Renaghan, 1999). As a result, several empirical studies within and across countries have been conducted in these segmented markets. For instance, a number of studies have sought to establish the perception of leisure guests with reference to hotel selection. Many of these academic studies conducted to understand leisure guests' choice of hotels were carried out in Eastern Asia (e.g., Tsaur & Gwo-Hshiung, 1995; kucukusta, 2017), Southwestern Asia (Sohrabi et al, 2011), Southern Asia (Baniya & Thapa, 2017) and South-Eastern Europe (e.g., Soulidou et al, 2018). To be more precise, a study conducted in this segment 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-Hshiung, 1995). Likewise, Kucukusta (2017) investigated how Chinese leisure travelers 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. Similarly, the main hotel selection factors of Tehran hotels in Iran by leisure guests were identified by Sohrabi et al. (2011) to include 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. At the same time, a fourth study in this category by Baniya and 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 study conducted in Greece by Soulidou et al. (2018) found cleanliness as the most important factor in the selection of accommodation followed by price and staff. On the other hand, very limited research has been conducted on leisure guests' choice of hotels in Nigeria, and fewer scholars published internationally (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2022, Ogbunankwor et al, 2023 a; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023b). Nevertheless, thus far empirical studies particularly on leisure guests' choice of hotels in Nigeria and other climes executed from the hotel managers' viewpoint are lacking.

Studies Incorporating Hotel Managers' Perceptions of Guests' Choice of Hotels
A limited number of empirical studies that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels have been executed in different countries of the world. Accordingly, some of these studies were conducted in Turkey (e.g., Cetin & Walls, 2015), India (e.g., Hussain & Khana, 2015; Nurula et al, 2022), Hong Kong (e.g., Chan & Lam, 2013), New Zealand (e.g., Lockyer, 2002) and Nigeria (e.g., Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Obeke & Abugu, 2021). Firstly, some studies focused on the perceptions of hotel managers alone (e.g., Narula et al, 2022).

Secondly, some studies directed their attention on the perceptions of guests and hotel managers (e.g., Cetin & Walls, 2015). Thirdly, others studied the perceptions of employees/staff, the managers inclusive (e.g., Hussain & Khana, 2015). Fourthly, some other studies examined the perceptions of staff and guests (e.g., Obeke & Abugu, 2021). Fifthly and finally, comparative studies involving guests' and hotel managers' perceptions also exist in the context of determinants of guests' choice of hotels (e.g., Lockyer, 2002; Chan & Lam, 2013; Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020). Moreover, these aforementioned studies were undertaken in order to gain deep insights on the determinants of guests' choice of hotels. More importantly, studies carried out on the determinants of guests' choice of hotels from a managers' perspective and related views were not focused on specific target markets like leisure guests, business travelers, and meeting and convention customers. Nevertheless, several empirical studies have been carried out in each of the homogenous groups or segment concerning factors influencing guests' choice of hotels from a consumer perspective (e.g., Kucukusta, 2017; Dube & Renaghan, 2000; Jahenbani, 2018).

As has been said previously, hospitality and tourism scholars have executed studies that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels from five focuses. Some of these studies are discussed hereunder.

A few studies have sought to establish the perceptions of hotel managers alone with respect to guests' choice of hotels. For instance, a study executed in India by Narula et al (2022) set out to ascertain the perception of hotel managers concerning the expectations of domestic women business travelers (DWBT) through qualitative analysis and proposed seven core themes associated with female symbols of expectations looked forward to by DWBT from their hotel stay. These are guest room as the expectation of servicescape and design, hotel services as the expectation of comfort, amenities as the expectation of quality and value, hotel security as the expectation of assurance and trust, augmented specials being the expectation of personalization, selection triggers being the expectation of convenience and suitability, and customized meal requirements being the expectation of health and wellbeing (Narula et al, 2022).

Moreover, studies have examined the perceptions of guests and hotel managers concerning guests' choice of hotels. For example, a qualitative study carried out by Cetin and Walls (2015) in Istanbul, Turkey analyzed the content according to two major factors – physical environment and social interactions – under which eight major categories were grouped. The study found that ambience, space/function/amenities, design, and signs/symbols/artifacts may be considered main themes under the physical environment factor, whereas, under the social interactions factor, the guests' experiences can be grouped under interactions with staff (professionalism, attentiveness, customization, attitude) and interactions with other guests.Nevertheless, the perceptions of employees/staff including the managers have been studied in the context of guests' choice of hotels. One of such studies executed in New Delhi, India by Hussain and Khana (2015) identified the most important features for providing guest satisfaction being "cleanliness, furnishing and comfort of the room" and "prompt round the clock room service with variety of items on the menu".

Also, studies on guests' choice of hotels can be seen from the perceptions of staff and guests. For instance, Obeke and Abugu (2021) prompted to establish the determinants of guests' preference for hotels in Enugu State, Nigeria and found that convenience, brand image and service trust significantly and positively determine guest's preference for hotels.

Conversely, comparative studies involving guests and hotel managers exist in the context of guests' choice of hotels. 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 factor in guest selection. Likewise, a later study by Chan and Lam (2013) investigated the gap between hotel safety and security managers' and hotel guests' perceptions of the relative importance of safety and security facilities in Hong Kong and found that guests perceive "well-equipped fire prevention systems in accordance with local regulations", "an emergency plan", "an emergency lighting system", "a 24-h uniformed security guard", and "the regular testing of hotel safety and security systems" to be the top five in-house safety and security systems, whereas hotel managers perceive "closed circuit television systems for hotel public areas", "emergency lighting systems" and "application of a guest key to activate the lifts to guest floors" to be the third through fifth most important. Similarly, a recent study by Jamiu and Abimbola (2020) examined hoteliers' and guests' perception of factors determining the pricing of hotel services and guests' satisfaction of services received against prices paid in Kwara State, Nigeria and found that hoteliers ranked hotel location, cost of raw materials, hotel rating, quality of in-room facilities, and quality of service attributes as the five foremost price determinants whereas hotel location, hotel rating, the season of the year, quality of service rendered, and government levies are the topmost factors perceived by hotel guests as pricing determinant.From the foregoing, the literature suggests that cleanliness and location are relevant to guests' choice of hotels from a hotel manager's perspective.

Existing Studies on Determinants of Consumer Choice of Hotels in Nigeria.
Most academic studies conducted to understand the determinants of consumer choice of hotels in Nigeria were executed in the southern part of the country (e.g., Kukoyi & Iwuagwu, 2015; Oladele et al, 2019; Anetoh et al, 2022; Ogbunankwor et al, 2022; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a). Interestingly, many of these studies were executed in the South-west geopolitical zone of the country. For instance, one of the earliest studies in this region that covered hotels and guest houses in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State by Otegbulu and Tenigbade (2011) investigated attributes that affect hotel customers' perception. The findings show that regular power and water supply, closeness to the city centre and good room service are some of the attributes that lodgers find most important in a hotel accommodation. A second study carried out in Lagos by Kukoyi and Iwuagwu (2015) revealed that service delivery and customer satisfaction are significantly related and could increase the patronage in a hotel. Another study (Gbenga & Osotimehin, 2015) executed in Lagos state found that service of the hotel, friendly staff, food quality and price had significant impact on repeat buy. A fourth study, Oladele et al (2019) executed in South-west Nigeria found that customer's 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. Fifthly, and finally, a study carried out in Kwara State by Jamiu and Abimbola (2020) examined hoteliers' and guests' perception and found that hoteliers ranked hotel location, cost of raw materials, hotel rating, quality of in-room facilities, and quality of service attributes as the five foremost pricing and service acceptability determinants of hotels whereas hotel location, hotel rating, the season of the year, quality of service rendered, and government levies are the topmost factors perceived by hotel guests as pricing and service acceptability determinants of hotels.

Likewise, many researches have been conducted in the South-Eastern geopolitical region of Nigeria. First, a study executed in Abia State by Nduka, Okocha and Chris-Nnamchi (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. Second, a study that used staff and guests as respondents carried out in Enugu State by Obeke and Abugu (2021) affirmed that convenience, brand image and service trust significantly and positively determine guests' preference for hotels. Third, a study involving selected hotels in Abakaliki metropolis, Ebonyi State by Nkwede, Ogba and Nkwede (2022) discovered that staff service quality, room quality, value and security effect customer satisfaction of hotels. Fourth, a study conducted in Awka metropolis, Anambra State by Ogbunankwor et al (2022) found that cleanliness and location influence consumer choice of hotels. Fifth, a study executed by Anetoh et al (2022) in Anambra State using Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi as reference areas found security, location, physical facility, rooms quality, electricity, service delivery and accommodation as crucial factors influencing consumer choice of hotels. A sixth study carried out in Awka metropolis, Anambra State by Ogbunankwor et al (2023a) found that facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. Finally, Ogbunankwor et al (2023b) conducted a study in Awka metropolis, Anambra State and found that the two factors investigated namely price and security influence leisure guests choice of hotels.

In the same way, very limited research has been conducted in South-south, Nigeria on the aforementioned subject matter. To begin with, a study executed in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State by 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. At the same time, a study carried out in PortHarcourt, Rivers State by Bello and Bello (2021) found that hotel tariff, service convenience, security and safety, physical environment, location, and staff behavior have positive and significant relationship with customers' hotel choice behavior in respect to the study area.

Apparently, only a few Nigerian studies (Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Obeke & Abugu, 2021) incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels. Unfortunately, none of these Nigerian studies that incorporated hotel manager's perception of guests' choice of hotels were carried out according to market segments (leisure guests, transient business travelers, meeting and convention customers). Moreover, the current literature suggests that cleanliness and location are factors worth investigating. This is because they are two of the most highlighted factors influencing consumer choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective.

Thus, these factors are suitable for helping us provide an empirically uncontroversial evidence of what works in Nigeria in respect to leisure guests' choice of hotels from a managers' perspective to ascertain their clean, competent, expert viewpoint.

Hypotheses Development
This project sought to examine factors that influence leisure guests' choice of hotels from the hotel managers' perspective. Therefore, the two factors identified were reviewed in this study. The following hypotheses to be tested empirically were proposed for the study:

Facilities
Previous studies conducted in leisure guests' context indicate that facilities influence leisure guests' choice of hotels (e.g., Tsaur & Gwo-Hshiung, 1995; Sohrabi et al, 2011; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023 a). Similarly, studies in Nigeria and other foreign countries that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions have found facilities to influence consumer choice of hotels (e.g., Cetin & Walls, 2015; Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Narula et al, 2022). In contrast, the study by Baniya and Thapa (2017) revealed that facilities do not significantly influence consumer choice of hotels. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H_1:H_{01}: Facilities do not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.
H_{A1}: Facilities significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Customer Service
Customer service influences leisure guest's choice of hotels as suggested by Ogbunankwor et al. (2023a) and shown by previous literature (e.g., Sohrabi et al, 2011; Baniya & Thapa, 2017). Likewise, customer service has been found to influence consumer choice of hotels in studies executed in Nigeria and abroad that included hotel managers' perceptions (e.g., Hussain & Khana, 2015; Jamiu & Abimbola 2020; Narula et al, 2022). Nevertheless, a study carried out in the unsegmented hotel market found a dimension of customer service not to have positive relation with customer satisfaction to influence consumer choice of hotels (e.g., Ali et al, 2021). Hence we suggest the following:

H_2: H_{02}: Customer service does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.
H_{A2}: Customer service significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Conceptual Model
The research schema is in line with the theoretical framework and formulated based on the preceding discussion and hypotheses (see Figure 2 below). Owing to this, this model is the most suitable for helping us confirm whether these distilled factors matter in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Sources of Motivation/
Motivational Forces

Outcome/Intended Goal/
Behavioral Choice
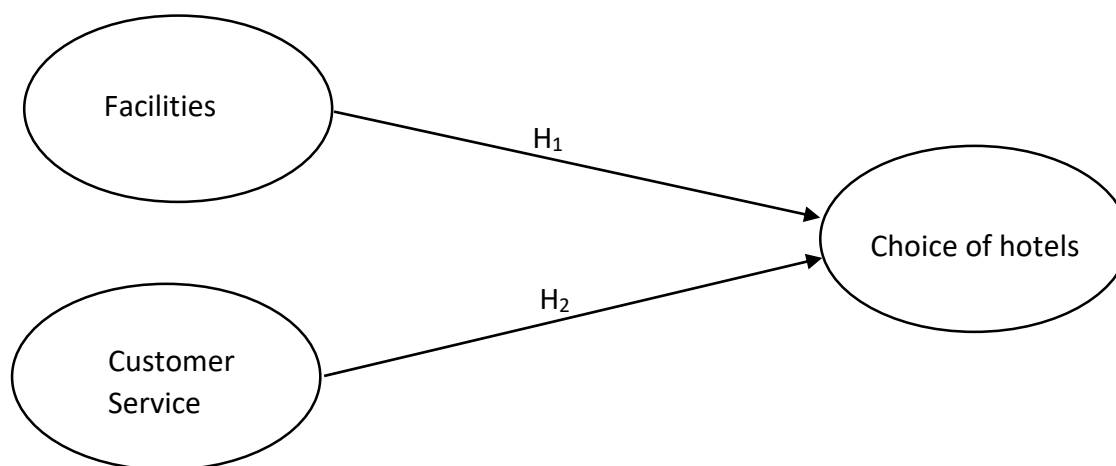
Fig. 2 Research Schema

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design
Survey or descriptive research design was adopted in this study. It usually consists of methods of gathering data from usually a large number of respondents, who themselves constitute a sample. In other words, it is an investigation of the opinions and/or behavior of a particular group of people, which is usually done by asking them questions.

Area of Study
The area of study is Awka metropolis in the very heart of Anambra State Capital Territory, Southeastern part of Nigeria. Also, Awka metropolis is the most important part of Anambra State Capital Territory because of the level of economic activities particularly hospitality businesses like hotels that thrive there.

Population of the Study and Sample Size
The population of the study comprised hotel managers' in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria. Moreover, the latest enumeration of hotels in Awka metropolis carried out by the Anambra State Ministry of Culture, Entertainment and Tourism had it that there were 84 hotels in Awka metropolis. As a result, the population of the study included the 84 hotel managers managing these 84 hotels. Contextually, the population of the study equates with the sample size of the study. That is to say, the population of the study is equal or equivalent to the sample size of the study.

Sampling Procedure

The fact that the population of the study is small and equivalent to the sample size made it difficult to design sampling procedure for this study from the general population. Besides, researchers are confronted with several challenges when undertaking surveys, more prominently in designing sampling procedures as well as in undertaking primary data-collection (Sohail, 2005). Because of the aforementioned difficulties and to ensure representativeness, survey instruments were distributed to each of the hotels via a census of all hotel managers.

Instrument of Data Collection

The survey instrument employed in this study to elicit response from the respondents is the questionnaire. Interestingly, each copy of the questionnaire had three major sections. To begin with, the first section comprised the introductory letter, instructions for completing the questionnaire and the respondent's demographic data. The demographic variables were sought using dichotomous, closed-ended or multiple-choice questions. Also, a question regarding how long respondents have been in the hotel business was asked in this section.

At the same time, the second section of the questionnaire contains the independent variables of interest in the study. This second section consisted of 9 questions concerning hotel managers' perceptions of leisure guests' choice of hotels. These questions employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1- extremely unimportant to 5- extremely important, in addition to 3- have no option/don't know.

Finally, the third section of the questionnaire contains the independent variable of interest (choice of hotel). This third section consisted of 4 questions concerning hotel managers' perceptions of leisure guests' choice of hotels. These questions also used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. In addition to 3- have no option/don't know, as obtainable from the second section.

More importantly, the second and third sections of the questionnaire contain the core subject-matter sections and were developed based on the research schema (see Figure 2). These sections of the questionnaire contain questions to enable the researchers meet the objectives of the study, and also test the formulated hypotheses. See Table 1 for the constructs, their sources and the corresponding adapted items that make up the survey questions.

Table 1: The Development of Survey Instrument

Construct	Source(s)	Adapted Items
Facilities	Akaegbu (2013) Lockyer (2005)	1. Availability of regular electricity and water supply. (x_8) 2. Restaurant available. (x_9) 3. Pool available. (x_{10}) 4. Relaxing lounge and bar available. (x_{11}) 5. Access to gym facilities. (x_{12})
Customer Service	Lockyer (2005)	1. Efficiency of front desk staff on check in, check out and billing. (x_{13}) 2. Courteous, polite and mannered staff. (x_{14}) 3. Sympathetic handling of complaints. (x_{15}) 4. Service provided as ordered and prompt. (x_{16})
Choice of Hotel	Clemes et al. (2009)	1. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if other customers say positive things about the hotel to other people. (y_1) 2. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if there is likelihood of their coming back to the hotel again. (y_2) 3. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if they consider the hotel as first one on the list when searching for accommodation. (y_3) 4. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if they can recommend the hotel to other people. (y_4)

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The face validity was evaluated by a panel involving four experts: two from the hotel industry and two from the academia. That is to say, these experts independently judged how well the constructs' measurable components represent the constructs.

To check the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was pre-tested through a pilot study to determine its effectiveness in soliciting information intended. The researchers used Cronbach Alpha reliability test to determine the reliability of the research instrument due to the nature of the instrument. As a result, copies of the research instrument were restricted on a sample of fifteen respondents who were representatively drawn from some hotels in Awka metropolis, Anambra state, Nigeria. Moreover, Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins and Kuppelwieser (2014) and Wong (2013) recommended that an internal consistency greater than 0.70 should be considered a good measurement. Therefore, the Cronbach Alpha values were considered high enough and the instrument considered reliable. As presented in Table 2, the Cronbach coefficient alphas for facilities, customer service, and choice of hotels are 0.990, 0.999, and 0.892 respectively. The results of this analysis done using SPSS are shown below:

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value
Facilities	5	0.990
Customer Service	4	0.999
Choice of hotels	4	0.892

Source: Cronbach Alpha Output, 2024.

Administration of the Instrument
The copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researchers themselves. To ensure that the distribution and collection processes were systematic and objective, the drop-off and pick-up method (Ibeh, 2004) was adopted. Moreover, the survey instrument were self-administered by the respondents. That is to say, each respondent completed his/her copy of the questionnaire on his/her own. More importantly, the researchers made sure the copies of the questionnaire were not administered to guests, other employees/staff of hotels except hotel managers.

Method of Data Analysis
To test the significant effect and the relationship between the dependent variable (or sometimes, the outcome, target or criterion variable) and the independent variables (or sometimes, the predicator, explanatory or regressor variables), multiple regression analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of SPSS Version 20.0 software at 5% (0.05) 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 the significance level (α) at 5% (0.05) significance level. All the items in the dimension of each variable were used to test each hypothesis.

Instrument Distribution and Collection
The number of copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents tallied with the sample size of the study. Table 3 below shows the distribution and collection of copies of the research instrument.

Table 3: 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
84 (100%)	73 (86.9%)	11 (13.1%)	73/84	86.9%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 is divided into two major parts. To be more precise, the first part, *Returned and Usable Copies Analysis*, shows that the total copies of the questionnaire produced and distributed to the respondents which is synonymous with the sample size were 84, representing 100%. Out

of this figure, 73 were returned and usable representing an 86.9% response rate. On the other hand, copies of the questionnaire not returned and unusable were 11, which represents 13.1% of the total copies produced and distributed. In consequence, following the 70% minimum return rate suggested by Kothari (2011), the 86.9% response rate in this study is considered sufficiently high.

Moreover, the second part of Table 3 which is the *Copies/Rate Usable to Total Copies Produced* compares the usable copies with the total copies produced. As clearly depicted, 73 returned usable copies represent 86.9% of the 84 total copies of the questionnaire produced and distributed. As has been said previously, this rate is considered sufficiently high to proceed with the study.

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

Demographic Profile of the Respondents.
Table 4 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample which is validly 73 hotel managers. This is shown hereunder.

Table 4: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Item	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	44	60.3
	Female	29	39.7
Age	18 – 29	6	8.2
	30 – 39	40	54.8
	40 – 49	15	20.6
	50 – 59	7	9.6
	60 and above	5	6.8
Income per month	Below N50,000	14	19.2
	N50,000-N70,000	24	32.9
	N70,001-N90,000	17	23.3
	90,001 and above	18	24.6
Educational Attainment	Non-formal/Primary	0	0.0
	Secondary	10	13.7
	Tertiary	31	42.5
	Postgraduate	32	43.8
How long Respondents have been in Hotel Business	Less than 5 years	27	37.0
	5-8 years	20	27.4
	9-12 years	13	17.8
	13-16 years	3	4.1
	17 years and above	10	13.7

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Data Analysis

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
COH	5	2.00	134.00	48.0000	62.62587
FCT	5	2.00	150.00	60.0000	78.11850
CUS	5	3.00	123.00	48.0000	57.84030

The description statistics for the independent variables, facilities (FCT), customer service (CUS), and the dependent variable, choice of hotels (COH) was represented in Table 5 above. The mean is used to establish a baseline. The maximum and minimum numbers, on the other hand, aid in the detection of data problems. The variation from the mean is represented by the standard deviation. It is a risk indicator; the greater the standard deviation, the greater the risk. That is to say, the standard deviation is a metric that expresses how much each item in a database deviates from the mean. More importantly, it is the most reliable and extensively used metric. As shown in Table 5 above, the standard deviations are 62.63, 78.12, and 57.84 for choice of hotels (COH), , facilities (FCT), and customer service (CUS) respectively.

Test of Hypotheses
In this section, all the formulated hypotheses were tested one after the other. Accordingly, data from Table 5 above were subjected to regression analysis using SPSS Version 20.0 software.

Table 6: Regression Analysis

	RSquare	Adjusted RSquare	Coefficients	T	p-value
FCT	0.969	0.959	0.985	9.762	0.002
CUS	0.993	0.991	0.997	20.965	0.000

Hypothesis One
    H_1: H_{01}: Facilities do not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.
      H_{A1}: Facilities significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the effects of facilities on leisure guests' choice of hotels. The Adjusted RSquare is the coefficient of determination which provides the distinction in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. From the findings in Table 6, the value of Adjusted RSquare shows a value of 0.959 showing that there was variation of 95.9% on leisure guests' choice of hotels due to changes in facilities. This implies that 95.9% changes in leisure guests' choice of hotels could be accounted for by facilities while the remaining 4.1% was explained by other factors not included in the model. Likewise, Table 6 reveals that the p-value is 0.002 showing that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5%); hence p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha value ($0.002<0.05$). Moreover, in Table 6, the regressed result shows that an evaluation of

facilities as explanatory variable shows positive statistically significant effect on choice of hotels, hence coefficient value = 0.985 and t-statistics = 9.762, showing that facilities is positively statistically significant on leisure guests' choice of hotels at 5% level of significance.

Decision:
Since p-value of the test statistic is less than or equal to alpha, we therefore, reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternative hypothesis which states that facilities significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Hypothesis Two
   H_2: H_{02}: Customer service does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.
   H_{A2}: Customer service significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the influence of customer service on leisure guests' choice of hotels. The Adjusted RSquare is the coefficient of determination which provides the distinction in the independent variable. From the findings in Table 6, the value of Adjusted RSquare shows a value of 0.991 showing that there was a variation of 99.1% on leisure guests' choice of hotels due to changes in customer service. This implies that 99.1% changes in choice of hotels could be accounted for by customer service, while 0.9% was explained by unknown variables that were not included in the model.

Similarly, Table 6 reveals that the p-value is 0.000 showing that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5%); hence p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha value (0.000<0.05). In addition, in Table 6, the regressed result shows that an evaluation of customer service as the explanatory variable shows positive statistically significant effect on choice of hotels, hence coefficient value = 0.997 and t-statistics is = 20.965, showing that customer service is positively statistically significant on leisure guests' choice of hotels at 5% level of significance.

Decision:
Since p-value of the test statistic is less than or equal to alpha, we therefore, reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternative hypothesis which states that customer service significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Table 7: Results from testing Influence of Independent Variables on Choice of Hotels.

Hypothesis	Variables Involved	t-statistics	ANOVA p-value	Remark
H_1	Facilities Vs Choice of hotels	9.762	0.002	Significant Relationship
H_2	Customer Service Vs Choice of hotels	20.965	0.000	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. Interestingly, as shown in Table 7, 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 customer service has more influence than facilities regarding leisure guests' choice of hotels with t-values of approximately 21.0% and 9.8% respectively.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The present study applied the conceptual model developed by Nigerian scholars (Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a) to examine leisure guests' choice of hotels from a managerial perspective and furthered our understanding of their attitude towards choice of hotels. Based on our findings and previous studies (especially Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a), it is now possible to construct a definitive model to predict leisure guests' choice of hotels. According to the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, we hypothesized that: facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. To be more precise, the application of the Expectancy Theory is that facilities and customer service represent the motivational forces whereas choice of hotels represent the outcome.

Consequently, the results of this study showed that facilities had a significant effect on leisure guests' choice of hotels. Although we did hypothesize this effect, the Expectancy Theory of Motivation can perfectly explain this relationship. This means that facilities as source of motivation can influence leisure guests' choice of hotels which is the outcome. This finding is in line with Tsaur and Gwo-Hshiung (1995), who studied multiattribute decision making analysis for customer preference for tourist hotels. Likewise, this study corroborates the findings by Sohrabi et al (2011) that carried out an exploratory analysis of hotel selection factors of Tehran hotels. Furthermore, this study is in agreement with Ogbunankwor, et al's (2023a) study on the importance of facilities and customer service on leisure guest's choice of hotels in Nigeria executed from a consumer perspective. Nevertheless, studies that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions made similar findings. For instance, Cetin and Walls (2015) executed a study of luxury hotels in Istanbul, Turkey to understand the customer experiences from the perspective of guests and hotel managers. Similarly, the preceding study is also in concordance with Jamiu and Abimbola's (2020) work on hoteliers' and guests' perception of factors determining pricing and service acceptability in selected hotels in Kwara state, Nigeria. More importantly, this study is also in line with Narula et al's (2022) study on expectations of Domestic Women Business Travelers (DWBT) from hotel accommodation in India via the perspective of hotel managers. In consequence of these findings, hotel operators should provide a variety of facilities to delight hotel guests.

Our study shows that customer service as a source of motivation can influence leisure guests' choice of hotels as the outcome. This is also consistent with previous Nigerian studies (Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a) and studies in other climes (e.g, Sohrabi et al, 2011; Hussain & Khana, 2015; Baniya & Thapa, 2017; Narula et al, 2022) in which customer service is an important factor in guests' choice of hotels. Therefore, the implication is that

Nigerian hotel operators should always render quality services to their guests and always work hard to satisfy their needs and expectations. Obviously, poor customer services would deter Nigerian leisure guests from patronizing hotels.

More importantly, the results of our study indicate that customer service has more influence than facilities. Moreover, this finding is contradictory when compared with Ogbunankwor et al's (2023a) finding from a guests' perspective that facilities have more influence than customer service. Therefore, the present finding is another confirmation that hotel managers do not completely understand their guests.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In short, facilities and customer service are essential considerations for guests when choosing hotels. In other words, to get excellent value for money spent on lodging, guests prioritize standard facilities and excellent customer services on offer by hotels. Therefore, hoteliers need to build hotels of international standard with world-class facilities and services to entice guests. Moreover, these hotel infrastructure and services have the concomitant benefits of attracting investors and tourists, creating job opportunities, catalyzing economic growth, positioning a city as a thriving global destination, and above all, enhancing a city's global appeal. More importantly, to benefit from the cutting edge or competitive edge which quality facilities ensure, hotels should embrace technology, prioritize guest safety, offer affordable facilities that are sure to impress guests, personalize guest facilities, and ensure high standard of facilities maintenance. Also, to improve customer services, hotels should prioritize guest feedback, adopt modern complaint handling systems for guests, properly monitor and evaluate customer service programmes, and create a thorough and strict customer service policy. In addition, hotel accommodation managers should offer personalized customer experience, ensure positive staff attitude towards guests, ensure low employee turnover, ensure good employee attitude to work and also ensure regular follow-up with customers in a bit to better customer services. Finally, hotel operators must be made to operate in line with the industry regulator's facilities and services standards to delight customers.

Suggestions for Future Research

First, the present study focused on hotel managers' viewpoint. In contrast, future research should validate the research schema using any of the other four focuses predominantly used in studies of this nature, namely perceptions of guests and hotel managers; perceptions of employees, the managers inclusive; perceptions of staff and guests; and comparative studies involving guests and hotel managers. Second, our study was executed in the leisure guests' market. Future research using the proposed research model should be replicated in the other specific target markets in the hotel industry like business travellers' or meeting and convention customers' market. Finally, the present study examined only two determinants of leisure guests' choice of hotels. As a result, future studies should include other important factors influencing consumer choice of hotels such as image (Callan, 1998), staff competence (Callan, 1998), past experience (Barsky, 2012), religion, (Richard & Masud, 2016), traditional beliefs

(Richard & Masud, 2016), perception of price (Kucukusta, 2017), and security (Anetoh et al, 2022).

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