

Determinants (Security, ICT and Room Service) of Customers' Patronage of Star-Rated Hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study examined the determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specific objectives, three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population was all the 28, 670 estimated guests at 15 selected hotels in Port Harcourt which have a minimum of 100 room capacities. A total of 377 guests (201 males and 176 females) at 15 selected hotels were selected using the convenient sampling technique. A four-point rating questionnaire was used to collect data. The data for this study were collected using the indirect contact approach with the help of the hotels' receptionists after obtaining approval from the managements. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the hypothesis was analyzed using a one-way or factorial ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. Major findings are that security is paramount for hotel customers' choice, and a major determinant for patronage of large hotels; the presence of security personnel was not accepted as a determinant of customers' patronage of star hotels; functional and active ICT systems are an expectation and determinant of customers' patronage of star hotels. The total mean scores indicate that quality room service is an expectation of customers from large hotels, and a prerequisite for patronage. Clean public areas like corridors were not an expectation to determine patronage; the presence of quality facilities in star hotels is a determinant of patronage by prospective customers for large hotels. The F-statistic of 23.99, and the p-value of 0.000004 implied that these three variables (security concerns, ICT expectations, and room service expectations) are significant determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt. The study recommended the need for collaboration with industry stakeholders and local authorities to ensure that security, ICT advancements, and service standards align with global best practices. The study concluded that for star hotel managers to win and retain patronage and loyalty of customers and potential customers, there is utmost need for an examination of this study's reports.*

Keywords: customer patronage, security, ICT, room service, hotels

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in economic development, particularly in urban centers such as Port Harcourt, Rivers State, a hub of commercial and industrial activity in Nigeria. Star-rated hotels in this region cater to diverse clientele, offering premium services that extend beyond basic accommodation. Star-rated hotels are classified hospitality establishments graded based on the quality and range of services, facilities, and amenities they offer. The star-rating system typically uses a scale ranging from one to five stars, with each additional star indicating a higher level of luxury, comfort, and customer service (Drucker, 2023). This classification helps guide customers in selecting accommodations that meet their preferences and budget.

Some characteristics of star-rated hotels include basic accommodations with minimal amenities, essential services such as clean rooms and basic furnishings and may not offer on-site dining or extensive customer support for One Star hotels; more amenities than one-star hotels, including modest furnishings and limited on-site dining options, as well as services like daily housekeeping and 24-hour reception may be available for Two-star hotels (Dick & Basu, 2024; Adeleke & Aminu, 2022). For Three-star hotels, mid-range accommodations with a balance of affordability and comfort, additional amenities like fitness centers, pools, business centers, and room service; while the rooms are typically well-decorated, and the hotel may have a full-service restaurant. For Four- and Five-star hotels, the features are higher and more sophisticated. They include upscale accommodations with high-quality furnishings, extensive facilities, and professional services, fine dining restaurants, concierge services, and luxurious room options (Drucker, 2023). Others are focused on providing a superior guest experience, often catering to business travelers and leisure tourists, spas, multiple fine dining options, world-class architecture. The star-rated hotels aim to exceed guests' expectations with unparalleled hospitality and attention to detail (Jones et al., 2022). In the context of Port Harcourt, star-rated hotels are important players in the hospitality industry, catering to both local and international clientele. They uphold standards that align with their star ratings, ensuring guests receive services and experiences reflective of their classification. Among the critical factors influencing customers' patronage of these hotels are security, information and communication technology (ICT), and room service, which collectively shape guests' perceptions and satisfaction.

Security remains a cornerstone of the hospitality industry, particularly in regions facing varying degrees of socio-political challenges. Travelers prioritize their safety, making robust security measures a key determinant of their choice of accommodation. Similarly, the integration of ICT in hotel operations has transformed the industry, enhancing customer experiences through efficient reservation systems, digital communication, and personalized services (Drucker, 2023). Room service, as a hallmark of luxury and convenience, is another vital aspect that influences customers' loyalty and patronage.

This study seeks to explore the determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, focusing on the interplay between security, ICT, and room service. By examining these factors, the research aims to provide actionable insights for hotel managers to optimize their services, enhance customer satisfaction, and maintain a competitive edge in the hospitality market.

Statement of the Problem

Particularly, the tourism and hotel sectors face a number of difficulties, such as unfavorable business conditions, stringent laws and regulations, escalating competition, and the effects of globalization, which has led to a demand for improved services from clients and potential clients who have traveled far. In the midst of these, the hotel business is continuously challenged to deliver better services that satisfy both customer preferences and international standards. The existence of five-star hotels, particularly in its capital city of Port Harcourt, makes Rivers State one of the Nigerian and African states where the hotel business attracts the most attention. However, a lot of these hotels have complained about how the industry's increased rivalry has hurt their bottom line. Regardless of their size, some hotels are occasionally packed while many others are almost empty. Even when they have business in the state, potential clients would choose to stay in nearby cities, which is more concerning. Several studies had examined strategies for promoting patronage by potential customers of hotels. It is against this background that this study examined security, efficient ICT system and good room services and how they can impact on customer patronage in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hotel industry: The hotel industry is a branch of the tourism industry. This is a commercial establishment offering lodging to travelers and sometimes to permanent residents, and often having restaurants, meeting rooms, stores, that are available to the general public. According to Abbas et al. (2020), a hotel is an establishment that provides paid lodging on a short-term basis. Facilities provided inside a hotel room may range from a modest-quality mattress in a small room to large suites with bigger, higher-quality beds, a dresser, a refrigerator, and other kitchen facilities, upholstered chairs, a flat-screen television, and en-suite bathrooms (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2020). Small, lower-priced hotels may offer only the most basic guest services and facilities.

Larger, higher-priced hotels may provide additional guest facilities such as a swimming pool, a business center with computers, printers, and other office equipment, childcare, conference and event facilities, tennis or basketball courts, gymnasium, restaurants, day spa, and social function services (Yiltsen-Tsenyil et al., 2019). Hotel rooms are usually numbered (or named in some smaller hotels) to allow guests to identify their room. Some boutique, high-end hotels have custom decorated rooms (Teas & Agarwal, 2020). Some hotels offer meals as part of a room and board arrangement. In Japan, capsule hotels provide a tiny room suitable only for sleeping and shared bathroom facilities (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2020).

Factors affecting the success or failures of a hotel development vary according to its primary function (Ampofo, 2019). This and the frequent turnover of guests (often daily) mean that hotels require more constant management than most other category of space. Hotel management includes food service and entertainment as well as the typical property management functions. The lease period is very short and to be successful, management must find tenants (guests) for spaces vacated daily, stressing the importance of hotel marketing (Ampofo, 2019). Hotels development is often criticized that they can destroy the attractiveness of a sensitive location. Hospitality is one very important facet of Ghana's economy. This is in close connection with tourism and hotels. A lot of revenue is generated from the tourism industry as a result of the influx of foreign visitors to the country.

Hotel quality: Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs. In the hotel sector, quality is a hotel administration term used to describe performance in service quality of hotels and customer satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2022). The quality performance needs to be improved continually with management techniques and quality standards, such as star rating system of hotel classification (Abbas et al., 2020). In conditions of increasing global competition, demands and needs of consumers, quality and quality management have become fundamental strategic factors of achieving profitability and competitiveness on the relentless tourism market (Booms & Bitner, 2022). Any serious top hotel management, with a defined mission, vision and goals, must define a "special policy" of improving the quality of hotel services through "structural programs of quality improvement," which have become an important factor in the hotel business (Abbas et al., 2020). With the design, introduction and control of a "special program" of quality improvement of hotel services, hotel management can have a positive impact on increasing satisfaction of customers and human resources, increasing competitiveness and market power of the hotel, the rationalization of operating costs and enhance the reputation and value of the hotel on the demanding tourist market (Kotler & Armstrong, 2022).

Overall modern business and tourism development philosophy is geared towards tourists, guests and consumers and satisfying their needs and desires. According to Kim (2013), modern hospitality is distinguished from other related activities in the sphere of providing accommodation by means of continuous maintenance of the quality of services and introduction of new types of services that are not characteristic of the hospitality business, all in order to increase the quality of basic services of accommodation and meet the needs of the modern consumers (customers). Survival of the hotel industry in the demanding and dynamic market and raising the level of competitiveness depends on improving the quality of hotel products and services (Booms & Bitner, 2022). Hotel companies that are focused on quality, and thus the satisfaction of their guests, can be successful in the demanding tourist market (Chen et al., 2015).

Aim and Objectives: The aim of the study was to examine the determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. To achieve this aim, the study carried out the following:

1. assessed customers' security expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State;
2. assessed customers' ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State;
3. examine customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Research Questions: The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are customers' security expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
2. What are customers' ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
3. What are customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

H₀: Security concerns, ICT expectations ICT expectations and room service expectations are significant determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt.

METHODOLOGY

Design: The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This was done by collecting information that would demonstrate relationships and describe situations as they exist. It was done without any prior experiment to know things to manipulate; and also, without influence or interference on any variable to be studied as suggested by Ampofo (2020).

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, which is center of tourist attractions as well as having the largest concentration of star-rated hotels in the state. The area has an estimated population of about 3 million and majority of the inhabitants are settlers from other parts of Nigeria mainly from the south east (World Bank Report, 2018). Port Harcourt is a cosmopolitan city. There are high class social activities, and various institutions and organizations do business. Competitions are high in almost all sectors including the hotel sector, as new hotels erupt almost monthly basis.

Population and sampling: The population for this study was all the 28, 670 estimated guests at 15 selected hotels in Port Harcourt which have a minimum of 100 room capacities. Over 25 hotels were visited physically to ascertain their nature. The sample for the study was 377 guests (201 males and 176 females) at 15 selected hotels in Port Harcourt which have a minimum of 100 room capacities. The convenient technique was used to select the sample size. The reason for this

sampling technique was due to the inability obtain a number of respondents which would be interested in participating in the study. Because hotels are not residential places, and many prospective respondents did not indicate interest in the study, the researcher conveniently selected only those who signified interest in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was a four-point rating questionnaire titled ‘Quality Expectations and Hotel Patronage Questionnaire (QEHPQ). The questionnaire was designed on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with scores 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively.

Reliability of the Instrument: The reliability of the instrument was determined by test and retest on 30 hotel guests from three hotels in Owerri, Imo State. This was so because the two areas have similar characteristics. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient to obtain a reliability score of 0.88^a.

Method of Data Collection: The data for this study were collected using the indirect contact approach with the help of the hotels’ receptionists after obtaining approval from the managements. The hotel managements were intimated of the nature and aim of the study. They were also promised copies of the reports of the study as this may help them improve on their services. Consequently, copies of the Quality Expectations and Hotel Patronage Questionnaire were printed and dropped with the hotels’ receptionists who solicited for the guests responses. The forms were filled, some guests dropped theirs at the reception at the point of departure, while others left theirs in the rooms to be picked up by the hotel attendant who returned them to the reception. The questionnaires were later retrieved from the receptionists the following day to enable the respondents take their time. In the end, a total of 351 (93.1%) (160 females; 191 males) copies were retrieved, and well filled, and used for the analysis.

Data Analyses: Data obtained for this study were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation with a cut-off mean of 2.50 using the formula below:

$$\Sigma = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = 10/4 = 2.5$$

The hypothesis was analyzed using a one-way or factorial ANOVA. Decision rule was as follows: If $p < \alpha$ (0.05), reject H_0 ; if $p \geq \alpha$ retain the H_0 .

Results: The data were presented in Tables 1-4 below:

Research Question 1: What are customers’ security expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on customers' security expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels

S/N Customers' security expectations and the implications for patronage of star hotels are as follows:	(n-160) Females			(n-191) Males		
	\bar{X}	SD	RMK	\bar{X}	SD	RMK
1. Providing information on walking distances in the local community	2.68	0.69	A	2.68	0.73	A
2. The presence of security cameras	2.82	0.71	A	2.94	0.72	A
3. Fire alarms	2.72	1.00	A	2.72	1.00	A
4. Adequate registration process	3.09	0.74	A	3.11	0.73	A
5. Security scanners	3.30	0.87	A	3.12	0.87	A
6. Inventory of all locks in the hotel	2.99	0.81	A	2.84	0.83	A
7. Well-documented staff	3.25	0.88	A	3.34	0.82	A
8. Established emergency procedures	3.25	0.84	A	3.36	0.82	A
9. Guest item safety	3.46	0.68	A	3.44	0.70	A
10. Presence of security personnel	1.69	0.76	D	1.70	0.78	D
11. High security lockers	2.90	0.79	A	2.75	0.67	A
12. Duress alert systems	2.70	0.70	A	2.63	0.65	A
13. Restriction of entrances	3.18	0.92	A	3.16	0.97	A
14. Outdoor maintenance	3.13	1.00	A	3.20	0.96	A
Total	2.94	0.81	A	2.92	0.80	A

Key: \bar{X} = Mean score; A (Agree) = ≥ 2.50 ; n=sample

Table 1 shows the summary of mean and standard deviation of respondents on customers' security expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels. According to the table, the mean scores ranged from \bar{X} 1.69 in item 10 for females to \bar{X} 3.46 from item 9 for females. The table also showed that the standard deviation ranged from 0.65 to 1.00. The results indicated that the respondents agreed with items 1-9 and 11-14 because they had mean scores of ≥ 2.50 which was the cut-off mark for the mean. The table reveals that the female respondents had a higher mean score of \bar{X} 2.94 as against the males' \bar{X} 2.92.

Research Question 2: What are customers' ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on customers' ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels

S/N ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star hotels are as follows::	(n-160) Females			(n-191) Males		
	\bar{X}	SD	RMK	\bar{X}	SD	RMK
1. Ability to book online	3.10	0.71	A	3.21	0.66	A
2. Ordering online	2.61	1.12	A	2.50	1.02	A
3. Ability to track payment	2.63	0.95	A	2.52	1.01	A
4. The presence of a business center	2.83	0.96	A	2.73	1.00	A
5. Smoke detectors	2.96	0.93	A	3.06	0.83	A
6. Efficient intercom	3.09	0.98	A	3.10	0.92	A
7. Functional CCTV cameras	3.49	1.03	A	2.50	1.02	A
8. Ability to make online payments	2.69	1.04	A	2.67	1.06	A
9. holiday greetings	2.58	0.96	A	2.54	1.05	A
10. reliable WIFI connection	2.56	1.02	A	2.61	1.10	A
Total	2.85	0.97	A	2.74	0.96	A

Key: \bar{X} = Mean score; *A (Agree)* = ≥ 2.50 ; *n=sample*

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on customers' ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels. According to the table, the mean scores ranged from \bar{X} 2.50 in item 7 for males to \bar{X} 3.49 from item 9 for females. The table also showed that the standard deviation ranged from 0.71 to 1.12. The results indicated that the respondents agreed with all items 1-10 because they had mean scores of ≥ 2.50 which was the cut-off mark for the mean. The table reveals that the female respondents had a higher mean score of \bar{X} 2.85 as against the males' \bar{X} 2.74.

Research Question: What are customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels

S/N Customers' room service expectations for patronage of star hotels are as follows:	(n-160) Females			(n-191) Males		
	\bar{X}	SD	RMK	\bar{X}	SD	RMK
1. Clean/well-kept room	2.51	1.05	A	2.60	1.04	A
2. Clean carpets	2.90	1.02	A	2.85	1.00	A
3. Clean bed linen	2.82	0.99	A	2.84	1.01	A
4. Availability of beverages and food items in the mini-bar	2.71	1.06	A	2.63	1.08	A
5. Clean public areas like corridors	2.35	1.02	D	2.45	1.06	D
6. Well lighted room	2.66	0.96	A	2.57	0.96	A
7. Ability to make orders	2.90	0.88	A	2.91	0.95	A
8. Quick response to meal requests	2.73	0.94	A	2.79	1.06	A
9. Clean toilets	2.96	0.95	A	3.04	0.95	A
10. Availability of clean towels	3.19	0.71	A	3.15	0.73	A
11. Functional toilet system	2.55	1.01	A	2.59	1.02	A
12. Availability of antiseptic and non-antiseptic soaps	2.59	1.02	A	2.64	1.01	A
Total	2.73	0.96	A	2.75	0.98	A

Key: \bar{X} = Mean score; A (Agree) = ≥ 2.50 ; n=sample

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of male and female respondents on customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels. The table shows that the mean scores ranged from \bar{X} 2.35 in item 5 for females to \bar{X} 3.19 from item 10 for females. The table also showed that the standard deviation ranged from 0.71 to 1.06. The results indicated that the respondents agreed with items 1-4 and 6-12 because they had mean scores of ≥ 2.50 which was the cut-off mark for the mean. The table also shows that the male respondents had a higher mean score of \bar{X} 2.75 as against the females' \bar{X} 2.73.

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

Security concerns, ICT expectations, and room service expectations are not significant determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt.

Table 4: ANOVA on security concerns, ICT expectations and room service expectations not significant determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic	p-Value
Between Groups	-	2	-	23.99	0.000004
Within Groups	-	21	-	-	-
Total	-	23	-	-	-

Table 4 showed ANOVA on security concerns, ICT expectations and room service expectations not significant determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt. The F-statistic is 23.99, and the p-value is 0.000004 (significantly less than 0.05). Implication was the security concerns, ICT expectations, and room service expectations are significant determinants of customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the research question on customers' security expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels indicated that the respondents agreed with items 1-9 and 11-14 because they had mean scores of ≥ 2.50 and above which was the cut-off mark for the mean. Consequently, the findings revealed that the security expectations of expectations for patronage are as follows: providing information on walking distances in the local community; the presence of security cameras; fire alarms; adequate registration process; security scanners; inventory of all locks in the hotel; well-documented staff; established emergency procedures; and guest item safety. Others are high security lockers; duress alert systems; restriction of entrances; and outdoor maintenance. However, the presence of security personnel was not accepted as a determinant of customers' patronage of star hotels. The implication of these findings is that security is paramount for hotel customers' choice, and a major determinant for patronage of large hotels.

These findings are in agreement with Abbas et al. (2020), MacDonald (2017) and Ihyembe (2020) who noted that security is a major concern for tourists, especially when they have to lodge in areas which are susceptible to security concerns. This is the reason Kim (2013) opined that hotel management prioritizes security. Hotel security is the management of the safety of guests and property in hotels, lodgings and entertainment facilities. It involves procedures, systems and personnel that ensure guests are safe in their rooms and around the venue and that their property and vehicles are secure (MacDonald, 2020). The hotel may have a department that provides and maintains security or outsource it to security agencies.

In regions or environments such as Rivers State where the tourism suffers because of the issues and challenges of security, it becomes a significant aspect of management. Security is a key aspect of managing a hotel. It ensures the safety of guests, staff and property and eliminates security risks

within the hotel premises. Understanding how to provide good security gives a hotel a distinguished reputation and promotes its growth and business operations (Kumar & Singh, 2014). There are various systems to protect hotel guests and staff. They include policies, staffing and technologies that can be subtly applied to monitor movement, secure property and guarantee guest safety. According to Bogoro (2016) outlined a checklist of security measures a hotel management can enforce to achieve customers' satisfaction: having an inventory of all locks in the hotel, including those for doors, windows and slide-and-chain bolts on guest room doors, and creating an inventory for and test locks on doors to all backhouse spaces and make sure these doors are always out of sight, especially during and after interior design changes; ensuring employees provide accurate and updated information in their registration process. Asking guests for several pieces of identification and know the number of occupants in every guest room during a given period. Also, adhering to data protection policies, keeping accessible records and using secure payment systems, and evaluating the parking facilities for guests and ensure their security. Ensure functional and bright lighting in the parking spaces, and trimming down bushes and trees that may obstruct the line of vision from building entrances.

When a hotel has and maintains a reliable security system, sometimes visible to customers, even online, this can boost the reputation of the hotel and even position on a pedestal for outsmarting other competitors. Hence, every large hotel management must prioritize security which is aimed at achieving the following: deterring crime and criminal activities in the hotel; monitoring suspicious individuals and activities; averting chaotic situations from happening or escalating; preventing the loss or damage of personal or hotel property; making guests feel secure within the hotel premises; providing immediate and effective responses to emergencies; prohibiting harmful and violent attacks on guests within the hotel; providing valuable assistance and information to law enforcement during an investigation; providing emergency medical assistance to guests; protecting hotel and guests' assets, including vehicles and luggage, from theft; helping investigate and recover stolen items; and escorting unruly guests and trespassers out of the hotel premises.

The findings from research question on customers' ICT expectations and the implications for patronage of star-rated hotels revealed that the respondents agreed with all items (1-10) because they had mean scores of ≥ 2.50 which was the cut-off mark for the mean. Consequently, the ICT expectations of customers in star hotels are as follows: ability to book online; ordering online; ability to track payment; the presence of a business center; smoke detectors; efficient intercom; functional CCTV cameras; ability to make online payments; holiday greetings; and reliable WIFI connection. These findings imply that a functional and active ICT system is an expectation and determinant of customers' patronage of large hotels. The findings are supported by Chever and Spencer (2017) who opined that with technology in contemporary time, consumers are able to do their own research on destinations, accommodation facilities, schedules or the money needed for a tour. These are available on the internet and it has become essential for budget and decision making, especially with regards to the hotel sector.

Information and communication technology has emerged as a determinant of successful tourism business as it has improved the sector especially in a globalized world where people know and expect to get things sorted out quickly and easily using the internet. It means that tasks such as hotel selection and booking, ordering, acquisition, tracking payment, and report are now undertaken by ICT. So, it helps the hotel to run efficiently with limited staff, as well as improved customer dependence (Czepiel & Culmore, 2017). Now, hotels directly get connected to the guests offering personalized leisure and hospitality behavior (Choosrichom, 2021).

The Information and Communication Technologies plays a major role in tourism, travel and hospitality industry. The integration of ICT in the tourism industry is essential for success of tourism enterprise. Technology can also enhance operational efficiency and help hotel management to reduce costs by replacing expensive human labour. In additions, it will improve customer service by facilitating smooth staff engagement and communication (Czepiel & Culmore, 2017). No doubt, the impact of technology in the hospitality industry is crucial. It offers a common platform for both, visiting guests and hotel management. The hotel's website and app need to be updated and upgraded with the latest technological advancements. One of the common loopholes observed is most of the top management and staff are not trained to utilize the information technology at its maximum. Most of them are still using the old, traditional tools. Hotel technology can be leveraged across all departments to enhance guest experience, streamline operations, manage post COVID-19 protocols, and improve communication between staff and guests.

Guests want the check-in experience to be quick and painless. Most airports allow one to check in online or go to kiosks where passengers can do it themselves and print out baggage tags without needing staff help. In many fast-food restaurants, one can place orders and pay via a tablet or kiosk. In cinemas, one can buy or collect tickets at a digital kiosk. Guests want that same kind of seamless, technology-driven, contactless experience in the hotel industry, especially as contactless hospitality becomes more and more prevalent (Choosrichom, 2021). Whether it is checking in at an automated kiosk by scanning a QR code or ordering room service on a tablet, there is no need to stand in a queue or have to leave your room to order food. Hotel guests want an easy and smooth experience. Technology allows this to happen in the hospitality industry.

Technology is essential for facilitating communication - especially within the hospitality and tourism industry where many businesses are large and dispersed. Sophisticated communication platforms are used by many hotels to allow different departments and members of staff to stay connected and respond to guest requests more efficiently. Hence, star hotels are expected to possess this advantage especially with the intent of winning the loyalty of customers and patronage of potential customers.

The findings from the research question on customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star hotels, the results revealed that results indicated that the respondents agreed with items 1-4 and 6-12 because they had mean scores of ≥ 2.50 which was the cut-off mark for the mean. As a result, the findings revealed that customers' room service expectations and the implications for patronage of star hotels are as follows: clean/well-kept room; clean carpets; clean bed linen; availability of beverages and food items in the mini-bar; well lighted room; ability to make orders; quick response to meal requests; clean toilets; availability of clean towels; functional toilet system; and the availability of antiseptic and non-antiseptic soaps. However, the respondents disagreed with clean public areas like corridors as an expectation to determine patronage. This could be because not many customers will pay attention to minor issues such as corridors in the hotel premises.

The total mean scores indicate that quality room service is an expectation of customers from large hotels, and a prerequisite for patronage. These findings are in tandem with the report of Dick and Basu (2024) who noted that to win customer loyalty in the hotel sector, one must identified strategies for improvement of personalized services such as room service. Room service is a hotel amenity that allows guests to order food and drink to their rooms (Jones et al., 2022). Hotel staff arrange the meal with the appropriate dishware and condiments on a room service tray. It is an in-room dining best practice to offer guests a rolling room service table in case they do not want to eat in bed.

Room service also includes ensuring all that will a customer relax without complaints. This include ensuring a clean environment (Eze et al., 2015). Proper illumination in the will make customer feel relaxed. Dick and Basu (2014) noted that poor lighting is becoming a growing cause of disappointment among guests in hotels. Nothing screams lackluster for guests more than poor, bland, clinical, or boring lighting. Although for many guests, this dissatisfaction may not be overtly arrived at, it can be a subconscious reaction. One study on lighting sought to demonstrate that light may acutely influence emotion (Drucker, 2023). Often without conscious thought. The way we light a room matters. Many hotels do not provide adequate or appropriate lighting options to adjust to the requirements of their guests. Be it bathroom lighting, bedside lamps, or dining hall ambiance. Guests expect improved lighting that can provide the right mood and ambiance, and that is adjustable to their preferences. Gone are the days of long ceiling-lined and regimental strip lights. According to Eze et al. (2015), ease and convenience motivates two out of every three room service orders. The desire for luxury is the smaller but still noteworthy motivation for ordering room service. Understanding why hotel guests order room service allows one to tailor the in-room dining amenity to their needs.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of security concerns, ICT expectations, and room service expectations on customers' patronage of star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, using mean and standard deviation and ANOVA for hypothesis testing. The findings reveal that these factors significantly determine customers' patronage, as evidenced by a statistically significant F-statistic and p-value. The results underscore the importance of these variables in shaping customers' preferences and satisfaction in the competitive hospitality industry. This highlights the need for hotel managers to strategically prioritize and optimize these services to meet customers' expectations.

The implication of these findings is that customers who choose star hotels for lodging have very high expectations based on international standards, which is motivated by globalization. Consequently, the findings imply that for star hotel managers to win and retain patronage and loyalty of customers and potential customers, there is utmost need for an examination of this study's reports.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Star-rated hotels should invest in advanced security technologies such as surveillance systems, biometric access controls, and emergency response plans. Regular security audits and staff training programs should be implemented to maintain a safe environment for guests.
2. Hotels should integrate user-friendly ICT systems, such as mobile booking applications, high-speed internet, and smart room technologies, to enhance guest convenience and satisfaction. Periodic updates and customer feedback mechanisms can ensure ICT services remain relevant and competitive.
3. Hotels should focus on timely, high-quality room service offerings tailored to guests' needs, including customizable menus and efficient delivery systems. Training staff to provide professional and courteous service can significantly improve customer experiences.
4. Regularly collect customer feedback on these key determinants to identify areas for improvement. Use loyalty programs and targeted marketing strategies to attract and retain customers based on their preferences.
5. Collaborate with industry stakeholders and local authorities to ensure that security, ICT advancements, and service standards align with global best practices. Advocate for government support in infrastructure development that benefits the hospitality sector.

By implementing these recommendations, star-rated hotels in Port Harcourt can enhance their appeal, foster customer loyalty, and maintain a competitive edge in the growing hospitality market.

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