

# Managerial View on Leisure Guests' Choice of Hotels: Testing the Effect of Two of the most Highlighted Variables

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**Abstract:** *Hotels in contemporary Nigeria strive to offer quality customer service and provide leisure facilities to guests. In spite of this, Nigerian hotels are still over-priced in relation to the physical structure, poor services and sub-standard facilities. In addition, the Nigerian hotel industry faces numerous security challenges. Moreover, it is not empirically established if price and security effect leisure guests' choice of hotels from a hotel managers' standpoint in Nigeria. To discover or prove the facts of the situation, we empirically test the structural model of leisure guests' of hotels developed by Ogbunankwor and associates in 2023 in which 2 variables (price and security) predict leisure guests' choice of hotels. As a result, the study employed multiple regression analysis to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of SPSS Version 20.0 software at 5% level of significance. Findings from a sample of 84 hotel managers in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria using survey questionnaire indicate that price and security influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. More importantly, security has more influence than price. In comparison, this finding is a confirmation of a previous research executed from a guests' perspective by Ogbunankwor and colleagues in 2023 that has similar finding. Therefore, the present study is a confirmation that hotel managers understand their guests to a large extent in this regard. Finally, the study conclude that to unlock profitable growth, hotels should take the issue of price charged and security concerns very seriously. Accordingly, the study recommends that hotels should employ occupancy-based pricing strategy and equip their properties with state-of-the-art security and protection systems.*

**Keywords:** leisure guests, hotels, consumer behavior, employee research

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## INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century marks a very important stage in the evolution of the hospitality industry. In other words, this century ushered in technological integrations in the evolution of the hospitality industry. To begin with, some of the tallest hotels were built in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and include Hotel Fairmont Makkah and Burj al Arab Hotel (Russell & Dawson, 2022). To be more precise, Hotel Fairmont Makkah is a 76-storey luxury hotel in Mecca, Saudi Arabia with 1618 guestrooms and suites whereas Burj al Arab Hotel is a sail-shaped 7-star hotel in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) that stands 321metres high on an artificial island and has 60 floors. At the same time, in the present century, there has been seen a great hike in the number of solo travelers globally who are not much bothered about the amenities, do not mind sharing spaces, and love meeting and interacting with locals as well as fellow travelers and that is why the concepts of youth hostels and home-hospitality have become new trends (Russell & Dawson, 2022). Moreover, in this Digital Age, hotels are beginning to implement more and more smart technology, reduce their carbon footprints by conserving water, reduce single-use plastics, and earn their LEED certifications (McCain, 2022). Also, in the current era, hotels are responding to a personality that reflect the local culture rather than standardized branding by focusing on opening boutique hotels and facilities that bring unique elements to their décor, amenities, and even floor plans (McCain, 2022). In addition, nowadays as guests want to spend their money on experiences rather than things, hotels are starting to cater to that by offering experiential packages as well as accommodations (McCain, 2022). Finally, currently via the internet, people can browse through all the possible option for staying in any part of the world and know about services and amenities, reserve their stay and also pay in advance (Russell & Dawson, 2022). As has been said previously, technology continues to play a major role in the evolution of the hospitality industry in contemporary times. As a result of the foregoing, the present day guestrooms and suites have amenities and services that allow for peaceful reflection and response in a bid to compete favourably in the accommodation or lodging sector. Moreover, this is in addition to the fun, good time, enjoyment, adventure, leisure, pleasure or relaxation sought by guests. That is to say, these facilities and services are meant to satisfy or delight the consumer in a bid to ensure continuous patronage. Nevertheless, this repeat patronage has led to statistics that are favourable to the industry.

Interestingly, the global hospitality market grew from \$4,390.59 billion in 2022 to \$4,697.57 billion in 2023 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7 percent and is expected to grow to \$5,816.66 billion in 2027 at a CAGR of 5.5 percent (The Business Research Company, 2023). Similarly, the global hotels and resorts industry is projected to have a total revenue of \$1.6 trillion with 682,000 businesses employing 8 million people that are paid \$332.2 billion in wages (IBISWorld, 2024). In consequence, the hotel industry continues to experience astronomical growth in revenue while employing people in their multitudes. Of course, these hotels are commonly ranked using star ratings as follows: one star, two star, three star, four star, and five star. Thus, hotel businesses of different categories continue to grow worldwide. According to Forbes, London is the city with the most 5-star hotels, with 75 recorded in 2017 (Williams, 2023). Likewise, the city with the second highest number of 5-star hotels is Dubai

at 61, followed closely by New York (59) and Paris (56) (Forbes as reported by Williams, 2023).

Of course, Nigeria has 34 five star hotels as recorded in 2015 (Ezeamalu, 2015). According to the Nigerian Tourism Intelligence Report, Lagos led the pack with 21 five star hotels; Abuja has 6; Port-Hacourt, 4; Ibadan, 2; and Calabar, 1 (Ezeamalu, 2015). In other words, five-star hotels are lacking in four out of the six geopolitical regions in the country that include the South-East, North-West, North-Central and North-East regions. Despite, the country's hotel market boasts of about 12,000 standard rooms and 3,000 short of anticipated 15,000 rooms by 2020 due to the outbreak of Corona Virus and its devastating impact on the economy (Obinna, 2021). Certainly, less than 5 percent of the room supplies is five-star hotels, while 1 in 20 Nigerian hotel pipeline project is a proposed five-star hotel (Obinna, 2021). That is to say, hoteliers in Nigeria continue to invest in other hotel categories apart from five-star. More importantly, these hotels strive to offer quality customer service and provide leisure facilities to guests at given prices amidst high-security.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Regrettably, notwithstanding the star rating, Nigerian hotels are over-priced in relation to the physical structure, poor services, and sub-standard facilities. Besides, unskilled and inexperienced hoteliers believe that exorbitant prices will enable them breakeven. In addition, inflation, inadequate infrastructure compensation by hoteliers in the form of lack of power and water supply are additional factors that shore up the price of guestrooms in Nigerian hotels. Similarly, Vanguard (2016) state that high cost of energy, multiple taxes and lack of social infrastructure have been given as the reasons why hotels in Nigeria are more expensive comparable to what are obtained in other countries. Conversely, the tourism industry faces numerous security challenges in Nigeria such as civil unrest, kidnapping for ransom and, recently, terrorism (Nwokorie, Everest & Ojo, 2014). To be more precise, examples of security risks in the hotel industry include terrorism, kidnapping, robbery by organized crime, opportunistic robbery, burglary from rooms, baggage theft, fraud, invasion of guest privacy by locals, press, interest groups, and blackmail of staff (Khadka, 2014). Nevertheless, it is not empirically established if price and security effect leisure guests' choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective in the Nigerian context. To discover or prove the facts of the situation, we empirically test the structural model of leisure guests' choice of hotels developed by Ogbunankwor, Nwangene & Chendo, 2023a) in which two factors (price and security) predict leisure guests' 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-Hshung, 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, employee research particularly in the area of hotel Managers' view on leisure guests' choice of hotels has been understudied in the Nigerian context. The very few indigenous studies that examined hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels and executed in the leisure guests' market (e.g., Ogbunankwor, Igwe & Okoye-Chine, 2024) were limited to investigating the influence of facilities and customer service on guest choice of hotels thereby leaving out additional factors such as price and security.

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, price and security. 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 price influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.
- To find out the extent to which security influences 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**

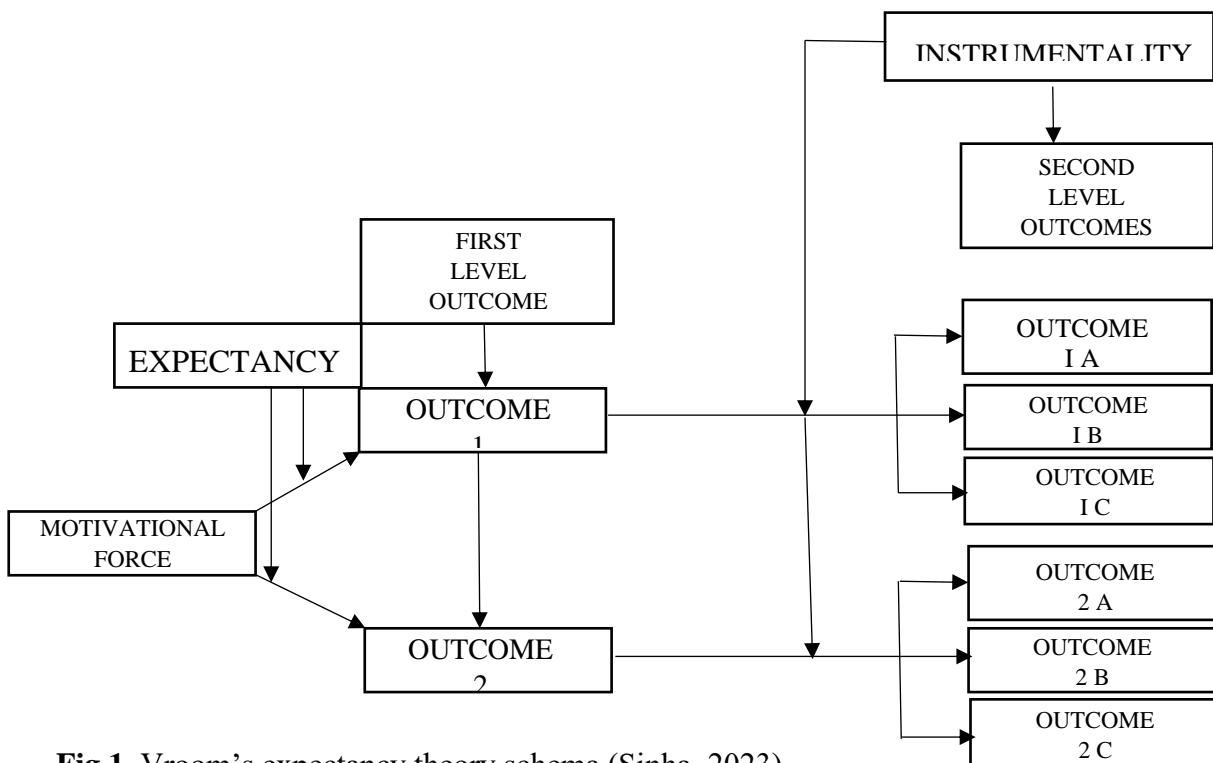
The theoretical framework of the present study is developed based on the adaptation of the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, otherwise known as 'Expectancy Theory'. To begin with, Vroom (1964) first proposed the expectancy theory of motivation in his book on 'work and motivation' domiciled within the 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. Of course, several of these researches that employed the expectancy theory examined the perception of the ultimate consumers or customers (e.g., Lee, 2007; Chopra, 2020). Nevertheless, a few studies that employed the expectancy theory were executed from the perspective of hotel managers (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2024). 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 price and security 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 behavior, hospitality and human resources management 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., Tsaor & Gwo-Hshung, 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 (Tsaor & Gwo-Hshung, 1995). Likewise, Kucukusta (2017) investigated how Chinese leisure travellers 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, apart from Ogbunankwor et al (2024) 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; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024). Firstly, some studies focused on the perceptions of hotel managers alone (e.g., Narula et al, 2022; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024). 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, apart from Ogbunankwor et al (2024), 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). In addition, Ogbunankwor et al (2024) undertook a study involving 84 hotel managers in Awka metropolis, Nigeria and found that cleanliness and location influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

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 (2023b) found that facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. Furthermore, Ogbunankwor et al (2023a) 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. Finally, a study conducted by Ogbunankwor et al (2024) in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, found cleanliness and location to influence leisure guests' choice of hotels although location has more influence than cleanliness.

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 Port-Harcourt, 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; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024) incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels. Unfortunately, only a few 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 price and security 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:

#### **Price**

Studies in Nigeria and other countries have confirmed price to influence leisure guests' choice in hotel selection (e.g., Kucukusta, 2017; Soulidou et al, 2018; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a). In the same way, Lockyer (2002) found price to influence consumer choice of hotels in a comparative study involving guests' and managers' perceptions carried out in the unsegmented hotel market. Despite, in Baniya and Thapa's (2017) study, price had no influence on consumer choice of hotels. In consequence, we postulate the following:

**H<sub>1</sub>:H<sub>01</sub>**: Price does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

**H<sub>A1</sub>**: Price significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

### Security

Research has also suggested that leisure guests are more inclined to choose hotels if they feel there is adequate security (e.g., Sohrabi et al, 2011; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a). Similarly, security has been found to influence consumer choice in hotel selection in studies that incorporated hotel managers' perception (e.g., Narula et al, 2022). On the contrary, Baniya and Thapa's (2017) study showed that security does not significantly influence consumer choice of hotels. As a result, we put forward the second and last hypothesis:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** **H<sub>02</sub>:** Security does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

**H<sub>A2</sub>:** Security significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

### Conceptual Model

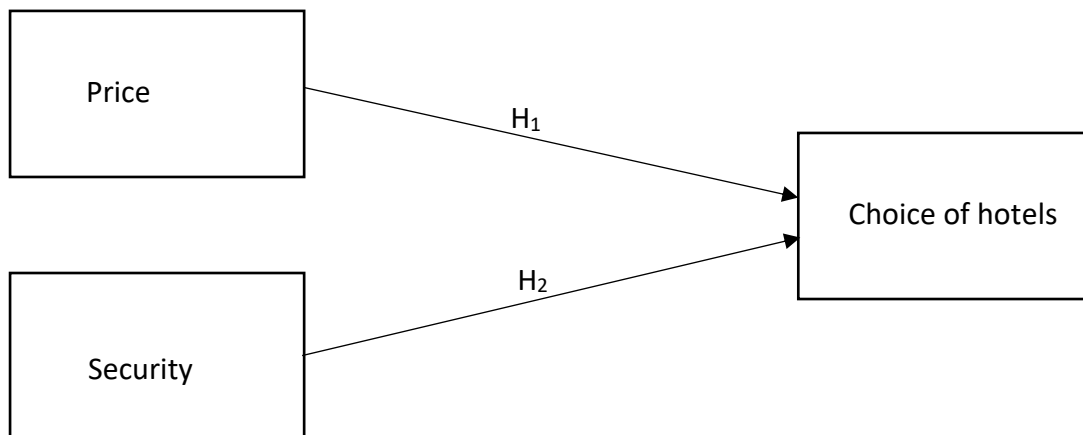
The research schema is in line with the theoretical framework and formulated based on the preceding discussion and hypotheses (see Figure 2 below). Owing to this, this model is the most suitable for helping us confirm whether these distilled factors matter in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria.

#### Sources of Motivation/

#### Outcome/Intended Goal/

#### Motivational Forces

#### 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 7 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 dependent 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
Price	Lockyer (2005)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Room rate price. (x<sub>17</sub>)</li> <li>2. Special rates or inclusive package available. (x<sub>18</sub>)</li> <li>3. Room rate inclusive of breakfast. (x<sub>19</sub>)</li> <li>4. Free newspaper. (x<sub>20</sub>)</li> </ol>
Security	Lockyer (2005)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effective room locking systems. (x<sub>21</sub>)</li> <li>2. Safety and security of hotel and surrounding area. (x<sub>22</sub>)</li> <li>3. Staff recognize returning guests. (x<sub>23</sub>)</li> </ol>
Choice of Hotel	Clemes et al. (2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if other customers say positive things about the hotel to other people. (y<sub>1</sub>)</li> <li>2. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if there is likelihood of their coming back to the hotel again. (y<sub>2</sub>)</li> <li>3. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if they consider the hotel as first one on the list when searching for accommodation. (y<sub>3</sub>)</li> <li>4. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if they can recommend the hotel to other people. (y<sub>4</sub>)</li> </ol>

### 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

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coefficient alphas for price, security, and choice of hotels are 0.890, 0.970 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
Price	4	0.890
Security	3	0.970
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 predictor, 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 ( $\alpha$ ) at 5% (0.05) and to reject the alternative hypothesis if the p-value of the test statistic is greater than the significance level ( $\alpha$ ) 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	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	44	60.3
	Female	29	39.7
<b>Age</b>	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
<b>Income per month</b>	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
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	Non-formal/Primary	0	0.0
	Secondary	10	13.7
	Tertiary	31	42.5
	Postgraduate	32	43.8
<b>How long Respondents have been in Hotel Business</b>	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
PRC	5	1.00	118.00	48.0000	57.81436
SEC	5	1.00	90.00	36.0000	42.49118

The description statistics for the independent variables, price (PRC) and security (SEC), 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, 57.81 and 42.49 for choice of hotels (COH), price (PRC) and security (SEC) 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

COH	RSquare	Adjusted RSquare	Coefficients	T	p-value
PRC	0.981	0.975	0.991	12.517	0.001
SEC	0.988	0.983	0.994	15.459	0.001

**Hypothesis One**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** **H<sub>01</sub>:** Price does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

**H<sub>A1</sub>:** Price significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of price 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 the Adjusted RSquare shows a value of 0.975 showing that there was a variation of 97.5% on leisure guests' choice of hotels due to changes in price. This implies that 97.5% changes in leisure guests' choice of hotels could be accounted for by price, while 2.5% changes were by other factors not included in the model.

Likewise, Table 6 reveals that the p-value (probability of rejecting the null hypothesis) is 0.001 showing that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5%); hence p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha value ( $0.001 < 0.05$ ). Also, in Table 6, the regressed result shows that an evaluation of price as the explanatory variable shows positive statistically significant effect on choice of hotels, hence coefficient value = 0.991 and t-statistics is = 12.517, showing that price 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 price significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

**Hypothesis Two**

**H<sub>2</sub>: H<sub>02</sub>:** Security does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

**H<sub>A2</sub>:** Security significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the influence of security 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 the Adjusted Rsquare shows a value of 0.983 showing that there was a variation of 98.3% on leisure guests' choice of hotels due to changes in security. This implies that 98.3% changes in leisure guests' choice of hotels could be accounted for by other factors not included in the model.

Similarly, Table 6 reveals that the p-value is 0.001 showing that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5%); hence p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha value ( $0.001 < 0.05$ ). Moreover, in Table 6, the regressed result shows that an evaluation of price as the explanatory variable shows positive statistically significant influence on choice of hotels, hence coefficient value = 0.994 and t-statistics is = 15.459, showing that security 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 security significantly influences leisure guest's choice of hotels.

Below is a summary table for analysis of variables towards 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 <sub>1</sub>	Price Vs Choice of hotels	12.517	0.001	Significant Relationship
H <sub>2</sub>	Security Vs Choice of hotels	15.459	0.001	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 price, choice of hotels and security) in the research model are statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . In addition, the results indicate that security has more influence than price regarding leisure guests' choice of hotels with t-values of approximately 15.5% and 12.5% 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: price and security influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. To be more precise, the application of the Expectancy Theory is that price and security represent the motivational forces whereas choice of hotels represent the outcome.

We discovered that price is an important factor influencing leisure guests' choice of hotels, which is consistent not only with Nigerian scholars' findings (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a) but also with previous studies in other countries (e.g., Lockyer, 2002; Kucukusta, 2017; Souldidou et al, 2018). That is to say, most Nigerian leisure guests consider room rate as one of the reasons for choosing hotels. In other words, Nigerian leisure guests are more likely to choose a hotel when the guests believe that the rooms are affordable and cheap in relation to available facilities and services rendered. In this sense, Nigerian hoteliers will benefit greatly if they offer affordable room rates, make available special rates or inclusive packages, make room rate inclusive of breakfast as well as offer free services.

Evidently, Nigerian leisure guests believe that security influences their choice of hotels as shown in the present study. This is also consistent with previous Nigerian studies (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a) and studies executed in other climes (e.g., Sohrabi et al, 2011; Narula et al, 2022). The implication is that Nigerian hoteliers should provide state-of-the-art security facilities in their hotels. Clearly, threats to security and safety in Nigerian hotels could deter guests from patronizing hotels.

Certainly, the results of our study which shows that security has more influence on leisure guests' choice of hotels than price is in agreement with Ogbunankwor et al's (2023a) finding from a guests' viewpoint. Therefore, regarding whether hotel managers totally understand their guests, this study indicates that they do so in this regard.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper has demonstrated that to unlock profitable growth, hotels should take the issue of price charged and security concerns very seriously. Of course, this posture will enable them ensure continuous patronage and be able to compete favourably in the industry. This is because price and security play important roles in influencing leisure guests' choice of hotels. As a result, hoteliers should set fixed prices at intervals for their guestrooms and avoid haggling over accommodation price with the concomitant disadvantage of compromising already set fixed prices and yielding worse returns. Nevertheless, in fixing prices, hotels should consider such factors as the number of hotel rooms available, the number of guests that want to make bookings, and how much competitors charge for their rooms. More importantly, hotels should employ occupancy-based pricing strategy. That is to say, when occupancy at a given period of time is low, their rates should drop to capture additional reservations and vice versa.

Despite, hotels should establish vibrant security departments and equip their properties with state-of-the-art security and protection systems. For instance, such security and protection systems like 24-hour uniformed security guards, closed circuit television systems (CCTVs) for hotel public areas, emergency lighting systems, emergency plan, and well-equipped fire prevention systems are needed to protect guests, staff, physical resources and assets. These aforementioned systems guard against a broad range of hazards that include crime, sabotage, espionage, accidents, fire, attack, and subversion.

Finally, hotels should always comply with local and national regulations when designing their security systems to avoid attracting penalties in the form of financial fines, limitations on activities, and even additional barriers to approval depending on the locality and country concerned. Moreover, such hotels could also face security breaches, loss of productivity, loss of clientele, reputational damage, disruptions in operations, and even lockouts for going contrary to the rules.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

First, the present study focused on leisure guests' market. In contrast, it will be worthwhile to validate the model in future research in the other specific target markets in the hotel industry like business travellers' or meeting and convention customers' market. Second, this study focused on hotel managers' perspective. On the contrary, future studies should validate the research model using any of the other four focuses mainly used in studies of this nature. These include the perceptions of staff and guests; perceptions of employees, the managers inclusive; perceptions of guests and hotel managers; and comparative studies involving guests and hotel managers. Finally, the present study examined only two of the most highlighted variables influencing leisure guests' choice of hotels. Owing to this, future research should include other

important factors influencing consumer choice of hotels as follows: staff competence (Callan, 1998), religion (Richard & Masud, 2016), traditional beliefs (Richard & Masud, 2016), facilities (Oladele et al, 2019), cleanliness (Soulidou et al, 2018), location (Ogbunankwor et al, 2022), image (Callan, 1998) and past experience (Barsky, 2012) to gain more complete understanding of leisure guests' choice of hotels.

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