

Do Cleanliness and Location Truly Influence Leisure Guests' Choice of Hotels? A Hotel Managers' Perspective

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this paper is to establish a model of leisure guests' choice of hotels. To be more precise, the present study examined the extent to which cleanliness and location influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. In the light of this, a study was undertaken from the hotel managers' perspective analyzing what they believed were the factors influencing guests' choice of hotels. To achieve the foregoing, this 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 census of 84 hotel managers in Awka metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria using survey questionnaire show that cleanliness and location influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. More importantly, location has more influence than cleanliness. In comparison, this finding contradicts previous research executed from a guests' perspective by Ogbunankwor and associates in 2022 that found cleanliness to have more influence than location. Moreover, the present piece of research is a confirmation that hotel managers do not completely understand their guests. Nevertheless, the study concludes that cleanliness and location truly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. Finally, implications for Nigerian and global hotel industry stakeholders are discussed.*

Keywords: cleanliness, location, leisure guests, hotel managers, choice of hotel.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) announced the day of September 27 as “World Tourism Day” (Russell & Dawson, 2022). Of course, the idea of this celebration is to bring sustainability to the tourism sector all around the world (Russell & Dawson, 2022). In other words, the aim of this special event is to ensure that tourism can continue to grow for a long time thereby fulfilling the needs of the current generations without compromising the needs of future generations while ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care and social well-being. Moreover, this remarkable target set by the UNWTO appears to have been reasonably met as the hospitality and tourism industry remains one of the key sectors in the contemporary global economy. For instance, before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was the largest service sector, providing one in ten jobs worldwide, almost seven percent of all international trade and 25 percent of the world’s service exports, a critical foreign exchange generator (The World Bank, 2022). Similarly, in 2019 the sector was valued at more than US\$ 9 trillion and accounted for 10.4 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) (The World Bank, 2022). In comparison, agriculture accounts for 4 percent of global GDP and in some least developing countries, it can account for more than 25 percent of GDP (The World Bank, 2023). That is to say, tourism in critical terms has overtaken agriculture in terms of contribution to global GDP.

Interestingly, developments in the hotel industry, a subdivision of the hospitality and tourism industry that specializes in providing customers with accommodation services follows this positive trend. In consequence, the global hotels and resorts industry had a market size of \$1trillion with 1,182, 044 businesses employing about 15,898,662 people (IBISWorld, 2023). More importantly, the hotel industry had a global average occupancy rate of 69 percent as of the final quarter of 2023 (SiteMinder, 2024). To be more precise, Europe has the highest hotel occupancy rate of any region in the world and as of 2019, European hotels had an occupancy rate of 72.2 percent (McCain, 2022). In the same year, Asia Pacific had an occupancy rate of 69.3 percent, the Americas had a rate of 65.6 percent, and the Middle East and Africa had a combined rate of 64.3 percent (McCain, 2022).

Surprisingly, Nigeria boasts of a hotel occupancy rate of between 70-80 percent (Obinna, 2022) which is well above the 64.3 percent benchmark for the Middle East and Africa as reported by McCain (2022). Also, revenue in the hotels market in Nigeria was projected to reach US\$1.52 billion in 2024 with a cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.46 percent from 2024-2028 resulting in a projected market volume of US\$1.81 billion by 2028 (Statistica, 2023). In addition, user penetration was projected to be 6.9 percent in 2024 and 7.5 percent by 2028 as the number of users in the hotels market in Nigeria is expected to amount to 18.93 million users (Statistica, 2023). Therefore, the hotel industry remains a key sector in the Nigerian economy considering the foregoing robust statistics.

Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately, many hotels in Nigeria still fail due to some challenges faced by guests in their rooms like leaking roof, dirty bed sheet, no hot water, poorly cleaned and maintained rooms that affect repeat buys, water pressure, bad mattress and bad linens (Ugamah, 2020). Moreover, it is more frustrating for guests when they are moved to another room and they experience the same or even worse challenge (Ugamah, 2020). Also, the uncleanliness of public areas, such

as hotel lobbies and swimming pools, negatively influences hotel ambience thereby affecting sustainable repeat patronage. More importantly, poor hotel dining hygiene negatively influences guests' health thereby leaving a bad experience that tells on the hotel's reputation. That is to say, inadequate cleanliness leads to negative word-of-mouth that deters potential guests. For instance, the average person will tell ten friends or colleagues about their bad experiences and 91 percent of those who do complain will never come back (Young, 1999). Therefore, the issue of uncleanness in hotel settings can mar the efforts of hoteliers. On the other hand, in Nigeria, some hotels are located in poor quality areas like crime ridden areas, dirty and noisy environment due to in most cases the cost of land and other associated costs for erecting such buildings (Nworgu, 2017). Also, it is not uncommon for hoteliers in Nigeria to locate hotels in low human traffic areas, inaccessible areas, areas far from the city center, and in areas inconvenient to guests. In consequence, this may lead to the commercial failure of such hotels. Nevertheless, it is not empirically established if cleanliness and location influence leisure guests choice of hotels in Nigeria from a hotel managers' perspective.

Interestingly, several empirical studies have been conducted in different countries of the world to understand leisure guests' choice of hotels from a consumer perspective (e.g., Tsaur & Gwo-Hshiung, 1995; Sohrabi, Vanani, Tahmasebipur & Fazli, 2011; Kucukusta, 2017; Baniya & Thapa, 2017; Soulidou, Karavasilis, Kehris, Theocharidis & Alberto, 2018). Likewise, very limited research has been conducted on leisure guests' choice of hotels in Nigeria from a consumer perspective (e.g., Ogbunankwor, Chendo & Nwangene, 2022; Ogbunankwor, Nwangene & Chendo, 2023a; Ogbunankwor, Nwangene & Chendo, 2023b). On the other hand, a number of empirical studies executed in different countries of the world have incorporated hotel manager's perceptions of guests' choice of hotels from five focuses. For instance, a few of these studies focused on the perceptions of hotel managers alone (e.g., Narula, Hussain, Kaushik & Demicco, 2022). Also, some studies directed their attention on the perceptions of guests and hotel managers (e.g., Cetin & Walls, 2015). Moreover, others studied the perceptions of employees / staff, the managers inclusive (e.g., Hussain & Khana, 2015). Yet, some other studies examined the perceptions of staff and guests (e.g., Obeke & Abugu, 2021). Finally, comparative studies involving guests' and hotel managers' perceptions also exist in the context of determinants of guests' choice of hotels (e.g., Lockyer, 2002; Chan & Lam, 2013; Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020). Apparently, only a few Nigerian studies (e.g., Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Obeke & Abugu, 2021) incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels. Unfortunately, employee research particularly in the area of hotel managers' view of 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, 2024a; Ogbunankwor, Igwe & Okoye-Chine, 2024b) were limited to investigating the influence of facilities and customer service on guest choice of hotels on the one hand, and investigating the influence of price and security on guest choice of hotels on the other hand, thereby leaving out additional factors such as cleanliness and location.

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, cleanliness and location. Moreover, these factors were originally tested in a structural model of consumer choice of hotels developed by Ogbunankwor

et al (2022). 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 cleanliness influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.
- To find out the extent to which location 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).

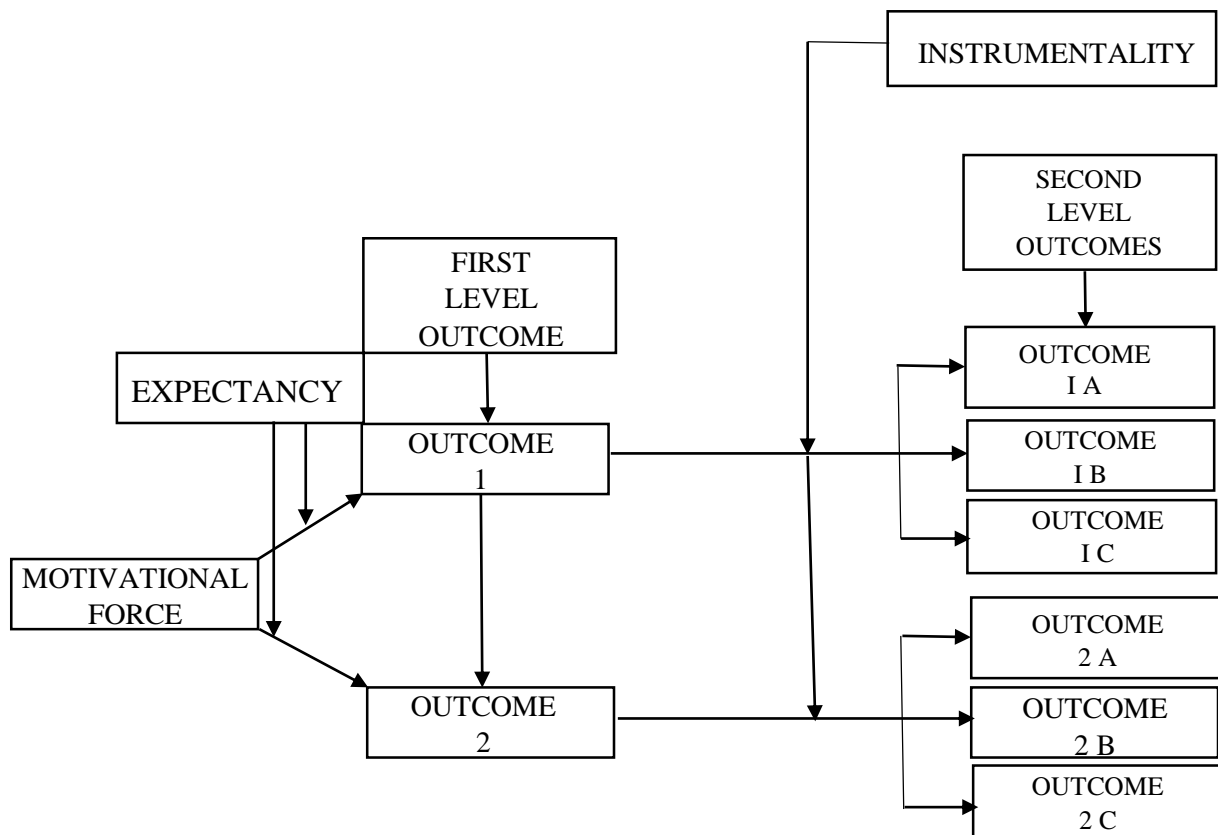


Fig 1. Vroom's expectancy theory schema (Sinha, 2023)

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

certain result, and the desirability of this result for the individual, known as valence (Condrey, 2005).

Moreover, the expectancy theory of motivation has been applied in different contexts by several studies. The list includes the computer applications industry (Baker-Eveleth & Stone, 2008), accounting environment (Ferris, 1977), sales industry (Oliver, 1974; Pousa & Mathieu, 2010), educational sector (Brophy & Good, 1974; Brophy & Good, 1987; Holdford & Lovelace – Elmore, 2001; Unda & Ramos, 2016) and the public sector (Suciu, Mortan & Lazar, 2013; Nimri, Bdair & Al Bitar, 2015). Also, the nonprofit organization sector (Zboja, Jackson & Grimes – Rose, 2020), tourism industry (Xuefeng, Zhenggang, Li, Qiang, Xusheng & Shuo, 2021) and particularly the hotel industry (Chiang & Jang, 2008; Barbosa-McCoy, 2016) have been studied by applying the expectancy theory of motivation. More importantly, several of these researches that employed the expectancy theory examined the perception of the ultimate consumers or customers (e.g., Lee, 2007; Chopra, 2020). Nevertheless, a few studies that employed the expectancy theory were executed from the perspective of hotel managers (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2024a; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024b).

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).

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 cleanliness and location 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 management 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., Tsaur & Gwo-Hsiung, 1995; Kucukusta, 2017), Southwestern Asia (Sohrabi et al, 2011), Southern Asia (Baniya & Thapa, 2017) and South-Eastern Europe (e.g., Soulidou et al, 2018). To be more precise, a study conducted in this segment in Taipei, Taiwan categorized hotel service attributes into seven hierarchies which include business image, hotel location, service attitude, room service, beverage and food service, hotel facilities, and hotel environment (Tsaur & Gwo-Hsiung, 1995). Likewise, Kucukusta (2017) investigated how Chinese leisure travelers value hotel amenities when they book hotel rooms in Hong Kong and found that price had the highest average important value, followed by airport/local area shuttles, wireless internet, breakfast and quality of coffee/tea. Similarly, the main hotel selection factors of Tehran hotels in Iran by leisure guests were identified by Sohrabi et al. (2011) to include promenade and comfort, security and protection, network services, pleasure, staff and their services, news and recreational information, cleanliness and room comfort, expenditure, room facilities and car parking. At the same time, a fourth study in this category by Baniya and Thapa (2017) executed in Nepal found that service quality and room and front desks play significant role in satisfaction of international tourists whereas security, business facility, value, food and recreation were found to be insignificant. Finally, a study conducted in Greece by Soulidou et al. (2018) found cleanliness as the most important factor in the selection of accommodation followed by price and staff. On the other hand, very limited research has been conducted on leisure guests' choice of hotels in Nigeria, and fewer scholars published internationally (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2022, Ogbunankwor et al, 2023 a; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023b). Nevertheless, thus far, apart from Ogbunankwor et al (2024a) and Ogbunankwor et al (2024b), 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, 2024a; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024b). Firstly, some studies focused on the perceptions of hotel managers alone (e.g., Narula et al, 2022; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024a; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024b). 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, 2024a and Ogbunankwor et al, 2024b, 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 (DWBTL) through qualitative analysis and proposed seven core themes associated with female symbols of expectations looked forward to by DWBTL 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 (2024a) undertook a study involving 84 hotel managers in Awka metropolis, Nigeria and found that facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. Similarly, another study in this category executed in Awka, Nigeria by Ogbunankwor et al (2024b) indicated that price and security 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 more recent study by Jamiu and Abimbola (2020) examined hoteliers' and guests' perception of factors determining the pricing of hotel services and guests' satisfaction of services received against prices paid in Kwara State, Nigeria and found that hoteliers ranked hotel location, cost of raw materials, hotel rating, quality of in-room facilities, and quality of service attributes as the five foremost price determinants whereas hotel location, hotel rating, the season of the year, quality of service rendered, and government levies are the topmost factors perceived by hotel guests as pricing determinant.

From the foregoing, the literature suggests that cleanliness and location are relevant to guests' choice of hotels from a hotel manager's perspective.

Existing Studies on Determinants of Consumer Choice of Hotels in Nigeria.

Most academic studies conducted to understand the determinants of consumer choice of hotels in Nigeria were executed in the southern part of the country (e.g., Kukoyi & Iwuagwu, 2015; Oladele et al, 2019; Anetoh et al, 2022; Ogbunankwor et al, 2022; Ogbunankwor et al, 2023a).

Interestingly, many of these studies were executed in the South-west geopolitical zone of the country. For instance, one of the earliest studies in this region that covered hotels and guest houses in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State by Otegbulu and Tenigbade (2011) investigated attributes that affect hotel customers' perception. The findings show that regular power and water supply, closeness to the city centre and good room service are some of the attributes that lodgers find most important in a hotel accommodation. A second study carried out in Lagos by Kukoyi and Iwuagwu (2015) revealed that service delivery and customer satisfaction are significantly related and could increase the patronage in a hotel. Another study (Gbenga & Osotimehin, 2015) executed in Lagos state found that service of the hotel, friendly staff, food quality and price had significant impact on repeat buy. A fourth study, Oladele et al (2019) executed in South-west Nigeria found that customer's patronage of hotels is a function of the good access road, constant electricity, constant water supply, basic security facilities and convenient parking space in that order. Fifthly, and finally, a study carried out in Kwara State by Jamiu and Abimbola (2020) examined hoteliers' and guests' perception and found that

hoteliers ranked hotel location, cost of raw materials, hotel rating, quality of in-room facilities, and quality of service attributes as the five foremost pricing and service acceptability determinants of hotels whereas hotel location, hotel rating, the season of the year, quality of service rendered, and government levies are the topmost factors perceived by hotel guests as pricing and service acceptability determinants of hotels.

Likewise, many researches have been conducted in the South-Eastern geopolitical region of Nigeria. First, a study executed in Abia State by Nduka, Okocha and Chris-Nnamchi (2017) identified cost, hotel environment, hotel facilities, income and staff performance as key factors that have strong influence on the customers in the hospitality industry. Second, a study that used staff and guests as respondents carried out in Enugu State by Obeke and Abugu (2021) affirmed that convenience, brand image and service trust significantly and positively determine guests' preference for hotels. Third, a study involving selected hotels in Abakaliki metropolis, Ebonyi State by Nkwede, Ogba and Nkwede (2022) discovered that staff service quality, room quality, value and security effect customer satisfaction of hotels. Fourth, a study conducted in Awka metropolis, Anambra State by Ogbunankwor et al (2022) found that cleanliness and location influence consumer choice of hotels. Fifth, a study executed by Anetoh et al (2022) in Anambra State using Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi as reference areas found security, location, physical facility, rooms quality, electricity, service delivery and accommodation as crucial factors influencing consumer choice of hotels. A sixth study carried out in Awka metropolis, Anambra State by Ogbunankwor et al (2023a) found that facilities and customer service influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. Furthermore, Ogbunankwor et al (2023b) conducted a study in Awka metropolis, Anambra State and found that the two factors investigated namely price and security influence leisure guests choice of hotels. Another study conducted by Ogbunankwor et al (2024a) in Awka metropolis, Anambra State found facilities and customer service to influence leisure guests' choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective. Finally, Ogbunankwor et al (2024b) found price and security to influence leisure guests' choice of hotels from the same perspective.

In the same way, very limited research has been conducted in South-south, Nigeria on the aforementioned subject matter. To begin with, a study executed in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State by Akaegbu (2013) reported that the availability of regular electricity and water supply, among other factors were perceived highly by customers in their decisions about hotel offerings. At the same time, a study carried out in PortHarcourt, Rivers State by Bello and Bello (2021) found that hotel tariff, service convenience, security and safety, physical environment, location, and staff behavior have positive and significant relationship with customers' hotel choice behavior in respect to the study area.

Apparently, only a few Nigerian studies (Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020; Obeke & Abugu, 2021; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024a; Ogbunankwor et al, 2024b) 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 cleanliness and location are factors worth investigating. This is because they are two of the most highlighted factors influencing consumer choice of hotels from a hotel managers' perspective. Thus, these factors are suitable for helping us provide an empirically uncontroversial evidence of what works in Nigeria in

respect to leisure guests' choice of hotels from a managers' perspective to ascertain their clean, competent, expert viewpoint.

Hypotheses Development

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

Cleanliness

Some studies in Nigeria and abroad have shown that cleanliness influences leisure guests' choice of hotels (e.g., Sohrabi et al, 2011, Soulidou et al, 2018; Ogbunankwor et al, 2022). Likewise, cleanliness has been found to influence choice in hotel selection in studies that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions (e.g., Lockyer, 2002; Hussain & Khana, 2015). On the other hand, previous studies executed in the total, heterogenous hotel market found guests not satisfied with cleanliness of hotels to influence their choice of hotels (e.g., Lockyer, 2003; Alananzeh, 2017). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis based on previous literature including Ogbunankwor et al's (2022) model:

H₁: H₀₁: Cleanliness does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

H_{A1}: Cleanliness significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

Location

Location is found to influence leisure guests' choice of hotels in Nigeria and beyond as shown in extant literature (e.g., Tsauro & Gwo-Hshiung, 1995; Ogbunankwor et al, 2022). In the same way, existing studies have found location to influence consumer choice of hotels in studies that included hotel managers' perceptions (e.g., Jamiu & Abimbola, 2020). Accordingly, we posit the following:

H₂: H₀₂: Location does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

H_{A2}: Location 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.

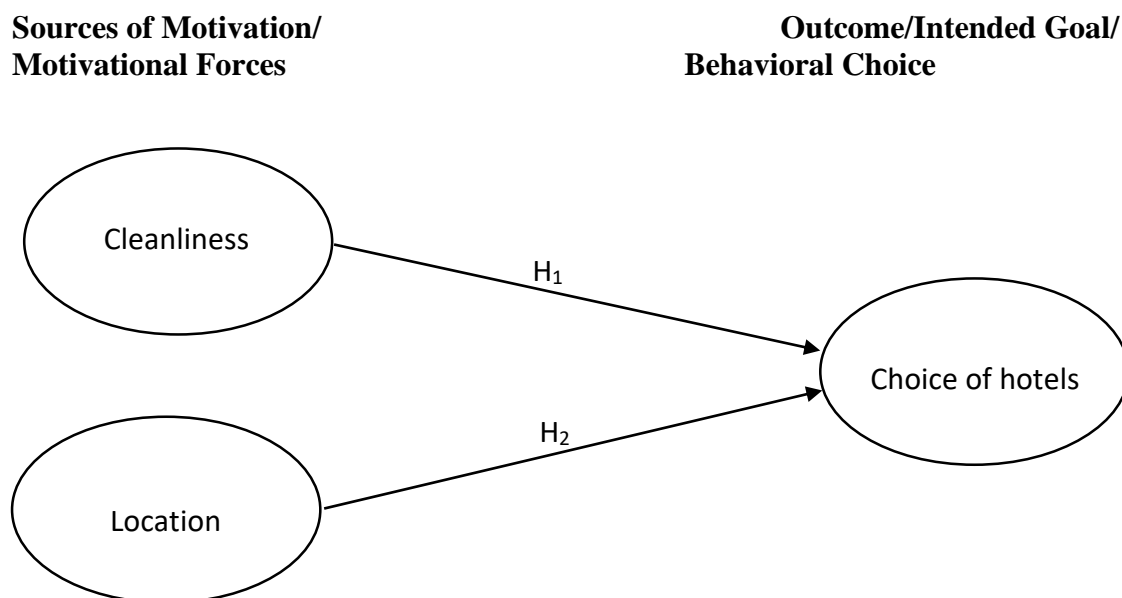


Fig. 2 Research Schema

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

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

Table 1: The Development of Survey Instrument

Construct	Source(s)	Adapted Items
Cleanliness	Lockyer (2005)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clean hotel surroundings, neat staff and tidy rooms. (x₁) 2. Non-smoking rooms. (x₂) 3. Attractiveness of bedrooms. (x₃)
Location	Puciato et al. (2017) Otegbulu & Temigbade (2011) Lockyer (2005)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distance from the nearest motorway/expressway. (x₄) 2. Existence in densely populated area. (x₅) 3. Closeness to the city center. (x₆) 4. Convenient to tourist destination. (x₇)
Choice of Hotel	Clemes et al. (2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if other customers say positive things about the hotel to other people. (y₁) 2. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if there is likelihood of their coming back to the hotel again. (y₂) 3. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if they consider the hotel as first one on the list when searching for accommodation. (y₃) 4. Leisure guests will choose a hotel if they can recommend the hotel to other people. (y₄)

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

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

To check the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was pre-tested through a pilot study to determine its effectiveness in soliciting information intended. The researchers used Cronbach Alpha reliability test to determine the reliability of the research instrument due to the nature of the instrument. As a result, copies of the research instrument were restricted on a sample of fifteen respondents who were representatively drawn from some hotels in Awka metropolis, Anambra state, Nigeria. Moreover, Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins and Kuppelwieser (2014) and Wong (2013) recommended that an internal consistency greater than 0.70 should be considered a good measurement. Therefore, the Cronbach Alpha values were considered high enough and the instrument considered reliable. As presented in Table 2, the Cronbach coefficient alphas for cleanliness, location, facilities, customer service, price, security, and choice of hotels are 0.993, 0.989, 0.990, 0.999, 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
Cleanliness	3	0.993
Location	4	0.989
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 (α) at 5% (0.05) and to reject the alternative hypothesis if the p-value of the test statistic is greater than the significance level (α) at 5% (0.05) significance level. All the items in the dimension of each variable were used to test each hypothesis.

Instrument Distribution and Collection

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

Table 3: Distribution and Collection Statistics of the Research Instrument.

Returned and Usable Copies Analysis			Copies/Rate Usable to Total Copies Produced	
Copies produced and distributed	Copies returned and usable	Copies not returned/not collected and unusable	Copies usable to total copies produced	Percentage of copies usable to copies produced
84 (100%)	73 (86.9%)	11 (13.1%)	73/84	86.9%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 is divided into two major parts. To be more precise, the first part, *Returned and Usable Copies Analysis*, shows that the total copies of the questionnaire produced and distributed to the respondents which is synonymous with the sample size were 84, representing 100%. Out of this figure, 73 were returned and usable representing an 86.9% response rate. On the other

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

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

Data Presentation

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

Demographic Profile of the Respondents.

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

Table 4: Respondents' Demographic Profile

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

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Data Analysis**Table 5:** Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
COH	5	2.00	134.00	48.0000	62.62587
CLN	5	2.00	101.00	36.0000	44.87204
LCT	5	.00	134.00	48.0000	61.43289

The description statistics for the independent variables, cleanliness (CLN), and location (LCT), 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, 44.87, and 61.43 for choice of hotels (COH), cleanliness (CLN), and location (LCT) 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
CLN	0.990	0.987	0.995	17.508	0.000
LCT	0.992	0.989	0.996	18.763	0.000

Hypothesis One

H₁: **H₀₁:** Cleanliness does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

H_{A1}: Cleanliness significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of cleanliness on choice of hotels. Moreover, Adjusted RSquare is coefficient of determination which provides the distinction in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. From the findings in Table 6, the value of Adjusted Rsquare shows a value of 0.987 showing that there was variation of 98.7% on leisure guests' choice of hotels due to changes in cleanliness. This implies that 98.7% changes in leisure guests' choice of hotels could be accounted for by cleanliness, while 1.3% was explained by unknown variables that were not included in the model.

More importantly, Table 6 reveals that the p-value is 0.000 which shows that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5%); hence p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha value ($0.000 < 0.05$). In Table 6, the regressed result shows that an evaluation of cleanliness, the explanatory variable, shows positive statistically significant influence on choice of hotels, hence coefficient value = 0.995 and t-statistics is = 17.508, showing that cleanliness is positively statistically significant on 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 cleanliness significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels. This is based on the fact that p-values of less than 0.05 are regarded as statistically significant (see Johansson, 2011).

Hypothesis Two

H₂: H₀₂: Location does not significantly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels.

H_{A2}: Location significantly influences leisure guests' choice of hotels.

In Table 6, a regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of location on leisure guests' choice of hotels. The Adjusted R Square is the coefficient of determination which provides the distinction in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. From the findings in Table 6, the value of Adjusted R Square shows a value of 0.989 showing that there was variation of 98.9% on leisure guests' choice of hotels due to changes in location. This implies that 98.9% changes in choice of hotels could be accounted for by location, while 1.1% was explained by unknown variables that were not included in the model.

Also, Table 6 reveals that the p-value (the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis) is 0.000 showing that the hypothesis is statistically significant at level of significance (5%) hence p-value of the test statistic is less than alpha value ($0.000 < 0.05$). Moreover, in Table 6, the regressed result shows that an evaluation of location, the explanatory variable, shows positive statistically significant influence on choice of hotels, hence coefficient value = 0.996 and t-statistics is = 18.763, showing that location 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 location significantly influences leisure guests choice of hotels.

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

Hypothesis	Variables Involved	t-statistics	ANOVA p-value	Remark
H ₁	Cleanliness Vs Choice of hotels	17.508	0.000	Significant Relationship
H ₂	Location Vs Choice of hotels	18.763	0.000	Significant Relationship

The result of the analysis including the variables involved, the estimated parameters, their t-statistics and ANOVA p-values are shown in Table 7. Interestingly, as shown in Table 7, the two hypothesized relationships (the relationship between choice of hotels and cleanliness, choice of hotels and location) in the research model are statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. In addition, the results indicate that location has more influence than cleanliness regarding leisure guests' choice of hotels with t-values of approximately 18.9% and 17.5% respectively.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The current study applied the conceptual model developed by Nigerian scholars (Ogbunankwor et al, 2022) 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, 2022), 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: cleanliness and location influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. To be more precise, the application of the Expectancy Theory is that cleanliness and location represent the motivational forces whereas choice of hotels represent the outcome.

Specifically, the results of our tests showed that cleanliness influences leisure guests' choice of hotels, which means that the motivational force influences the outcome or intended goal during the guests' buying experience. Interestingly, this finding is consistent not only with Nigerian scholars' findings (e.g., Ogbunankwor et al, 2022) but also with previous studies in other countries (e.g., Lockyer, 2002; Sohrabi et al, 2018; Hussain & Khana, 2015; Soulidou et al, 2018). That is to say, most Nigerian leisure guests consider cleanliness as one of the reasons for choosing hotels. In other words, Nigerian leisure guests are more likely to choose hotels when the guests believe that the hotels have clean surroundings, neat staff, tidy rooms, non-smoking guestrooms and attractive bedrooms. In this sense, Nigerian hoteliers will benefit greatly from hotels offering the aforementioned.

Our study also supported that location influences Nigerian leisure guests' choice of hotels. This finding seems somewhat consistent with Tsauro and Gwo-Hsiung's (1995) finding in Taiwan and Ogbunankwor et al's (2022) and Jamiu and Abimbola's (2020) findings in Nigeria. This indicates that the more Nigerian hotels are better located especially in good quality areas, the more likely leisure guests would choose the hotels. Very probably, Nigerian leisure guests do not patronize hotels when they feel the hotels are located in crime ridden areas, dirty areas and noisy environment. This finding has significant implications for the Nigerian hotel industry. For example, Nigerian hoteliers' failure to locate hotels adequately has engendered diminishing patronage for hotel services among Nigerian leisure guests. Moreover, the Nigerian hotel industry regulators are also to be blamed as Nigerian hotel operators are not yet required by any specific law or regulation to locate their hotels in good quality areas. Therefore, there is an urgent need for Nigerian hotel industry regulators to do the needful. Otherwise, the commercial success of some badly located hotels are at stake.

Nevertheless, the results of our study indicate that location has more influence than cleanliness. This is contradictory when compared with Ogbunankwor et al's (2022) finding from a guest's perspective that cleanliness has more influence than location. This research is a confirmation that hotel managers do not totally understand their guests. As a result, managers may apportion

resources to items that are not so important to hotel guests to the detriment of guest satisfaction and hotel occupancy rates. That is to say, there should be a more rational use of resources to ensure profitability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, cleanliness and location truly influence leisure guests' choice of hotels. As a result, hoteliers should ensure that hotels are cleaned and located in a sustainable manner to draw in the needed guests. For example, hotels should constantly be kept clean and tidy with clean guestrooms, fresh bed sheets, spotless bathrooms, and well-maintained public areas to enhance guest comfort, and also make guests have a comfortable and memorable stay. Accordingly, these will make guests leave positive reviews and book another stay. Moreover, hotel staff should follow good personal hygiene practices to protect the guests' health and maintain the hotels' reputation. To be more precise, hotel staff should wash hands frequently especially before handling food and drinks and always wear appropriate clothing, such as gloves and hairnets. In addition, hotels should replace toiletries, linens and towels less frequently to ensure sustainability. Also, hotels should set up sanitizing stations throughout their property as well as increase cleaning and disinfecting frequencies to improve guests' comfort. More importantly, an eco-friendlier approach to hotel housekeeping will be achieved by encouraging water conservation measures, establishing efficient waste management and recycling programmes, encouraging energy saving, promoting local sourcing, applying sustainable laundry practices and embracing green cleaning solutions.

Moreover, hotels should be located near popular tourist attractions and transportation hubs like major highways, airports or bus stations to attract more guests. Also, hotels should be located close to other businesses and services like local shopping malls, restaurants, or other amenities to attract customers. Finally, hoteliers should consider communication availability, investment incentives, land prices, good quality areas like crime free areas, clean environment, high human traffic areas, accessible areas and areas convenient to guests when locating hotels.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is imbued with some limitations. First, the sample size, although comparable with many other similar studies, is considered small and as such an obvious limitation. Future studies with larger samples are likely to enrich extant literature. Second, this study focused on what hotel managers alone believe were the factors influencing leisure guests' choice of hotels. Further research should focus on any of the other focuses that incorporated hotel managers' perceptions of guests' choice of hotels (e.g., guests and hotel managers; hotel employees/staff; staff and guests; or comparative studies involving guests and hotel managers). Finally, the present study examined only two of the most highlighted factors influencing leisure guests' choice of hotels. Accordingly, future research from the same perspective should include other highlighted factors influencing guests' choice of hotels such as perception of past experience (Barsky, 2012), and image (Callan, 1998), to gain more comprehensive insight.

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