
ASSESSMENT OF HOTEL DÉCOR AND CUSTOMER'S SATISFACTION AND PATRONAGE IN HOTEL INDUSTRY IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The specific aim of this paper was to assess hotel décor as determinant of customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry in Lagos State. Ex-post facto design was adopted for this study. The study was conducted at Beni Gold Hotel and Apartment and Integrity Hotel & Suites in Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of management staffs from the two aforementioned hotels, respectively. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 40 respondents from each of the hotels, and this gave a sample size of 80 respondents, which was used for the study. The main instrument for the study was a questionnaire tagged "Role of Ambience on Customers' Patronage in Hotel Industry Questionnaire" (RACPHIQ). A letter of introduction was given to the heads of the organisations for understanding and assistance. The questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher for data collection, was administered to the respondents and retrieved six days later from each respondent in the two selected hotels in Victoria Island, Lagos. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques, such as simple regression analysis, for testing the hypotheses. The test for significance was done at a 0.05 alpha level and at 68 degree of freedom. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that décor contributes to the attractiveness of the physical environment. While customers remain inside a hotel, they are likely to evaluate, consciously or subconsciously, the pleasant appearance of the interior designs as well as the quality of the materials used in construction, artwork, and decoration. One of the recommendations made was that hotels' managers should not dismiss the importance of decor in their continual attempts to provide the best quality service based on their own understanding of service quality. Hence, decor cannot be ignored in the realm of achieving effective customer patronage in hotels.

KEYWORDS: Ambience, Décor & Customer patronage.

Introduction

Ambience can have a differential influence on responses from customers with different personalities. A comfortable ambience acts to enhance customers' satisfaction and patronage, serves to ensure behavioural intentions towards the service environment and positive reviews about the service, and creates a favourable image of the service or brand in the mind of the customer. Han and Ryu (2009) described patronage as the repeat purchase behaviour at a particular store for either the same products or any other products. From the views of the aforementioned authors, it shows that the survival of any business is a function of the rate of patronage. Several researchers have found that customers' satisfaction and patronage are dependent on factors such as service environments, perceived cost or price (Jani and Han, 2011), and consumption emotions (Ladhari et al., 2008), among other factors.

Few studies have focused on the impact of personal variables such as personality on customer satisfaction (Gountas & Gountas, 2007). For this reason, there is little evidence of the relationship. Among the few studies that have examined the relationship between personality and satisfaction, the findings do not agree (Vazquez-Carrasco & Foxall, 2006). Gountas and Gountas (2007), utilising Jungian personality types of thinking, material, feeling, and intuition as factors influencing satisfaction and patronage, noted a significant relationship. Faullant et al. (2011), in utilising joy and fear as aspects of extraversion and neuroticism, respectively, noted joy to have a positive effect on overall customer satisfaction and patronage, while fear has a negative effect on overall customer satisfaction. A study by Mooradian and Olver (1997) on automobile customers noted that extraversion had a positive impact on their satisfaction via positive emotions, while neuroticism had a negative effect through negative emotions. Lin (2010b) in studying toys and video game customers noted that agreeableness had a strong and significant positive effect on customers' affective loyalty and that openness to experience had a moderately significant positive effect on affective loyalty.

Statement of Problem

Few studies have focused on the role of ambience in customers' patronage in hotels, such as temperature, lighting, noise, music, and scent. For this reason, there is little evidence of the role of ambience in customers' patronage. Among the few studies having related variables such as lighting and air quality on customers' patronage, Steffy (1990) suggested that in hotel environments where the lighting is designed to harmonise with furniture and accessories, as well as the good odour perceived by the customers, this can lead to customer satisfaction and patronage, but in a situation where the lighting does not harmonise or the odour in the hotel environment is not pleasant with other elements of the room, this can lead to customer dissatisfaction or may influence customer patronage. This has brought us to the main objective of this study, which is to examine the role of ambience in customers' patronage in the hotel industry.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of ambience on customers' patronage in hotel industry. Specifically:

To examine the influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry.

Research Question

What is the influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Customer's Patronage

Patronage is defined as the degree to which a customer exhibits repeat purchase behaviour from a service provider, possesses a positive, long-lasting attitude and disposition towards a service provider (Gremler & Brown, 1996). From the view of Oliver (1999), customer patronage is defined as a deeply held commitment to repurchase a firm's products at the expense of a competitor's offering. Patronage is the repeat purchase behaviour at a particular store for either the same products or any other products. From the views of the aforementioned authors it shows that the survival of any business is a function of the rate of patronage. This shows that the main reason for establishing a business is to create customers.

Moderation Effect of Hotel Ambience

Ambient conditions that are part of the broader service scape (Bitner, 1990) have long been noted as having an influence on customer satisfaction, behavioural intentions, and image (Baker et al., 1994). A comfortable ambience acts to enhance customer satisfaction, serves to ensure behavioural intentions toward the service environment and positive reviews about service, and creates a favourable image of the service or brand in the mind of the customer. Apart from influencing such variables, ambience can have a differential influence on responses from customers with different personalities.

The Mehrabian and Russell (1974) model of stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) supports the personality and ambience argument. In the consumption context, the model explains how the environment evokes different consumer responses that lead to either approach or avoidance behaviour toward the service environment. Turley and Milliman (2000) argued that potential interactions between atmosphere and individual characteristics determine individuals' responses to an environment by viewing atmosphere as a much broader concept that includes the physical

environment. They further asserted that a different environment might produce a different response in different individuals. This personality and environment interaction yielding different individual responses implies a complex relationship that can mean either of the causation factors being regarded as an independent factor with the other one being a moderator.

Namasivayam and Lin (2004), for instance, insisted that servicescapes can be antecedents of consumers' service or product evaluations as well as moderators of the evaluation process. Lin and Worthley (2012) proposed and verified the moderating impact of different servicescape situations on customers' post-purchase behavior. Their study was based on an experimental design in which, in order to create differential servicescapes, ambient stimuli combining colours and music were manipulated. In another study, Lin (2010b) further tested the interactive effect of a Gestalt situation that entailed a different combination of colour and music in moderating arousal and emotional tendency. This study further positions service scape elements, including ambience, as a potential moderator with other variables being the main ones in consumer response factors. In Jiang and Wang (2006), using hedonic and utilitarian services as moderators in testing the influence of effect on satisfaction, noted under hedonic environments, the relationship was stronger. The way they expounded the hedonic context like Karaoke vs. the utilitarian context like banking services basically boils down to service ambience like music, for instance, thus further providing insights into the potential moderation effect of ambience on the present study relationships. In this study, hotel ambience that was measured was dichotomized into low and high ambience groups through cluster analysis.

Décor and Customers Patronage

Décor contributes to the attractiveness of the physical environment (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). While customers remain inside a hotel, they are likely to evaluate, consciously or subconsciously, the pleasant appearance of the interior designs as well as the quality of the materials used in construction, artwork, and decoration. Their evaluations of the attractiveness and overall aesthetic impression are influenced by various aspects of interior schemes as well as artefacts (Bitner, 1992).

In a hotel, the colour schemes of the dining area's walls, ceilings, wall decorations, pictures, paintings, plants, flowers, tableware (e.g. glass and silverware), linens (e.g. table cloths and napkins), floor coverings, and quality furniture can all play an important part in delivering an image and in creating an overall aesthetic impression. In addition, from a customer's viewpoint, these can be important environmental cues to evaluate their overall experience in an operation and a determinate of their continuous patronage.

Customers' satisfaction and patronage, Hotel image, and Loyalty

The overly researched construct of customer satisfaction emanates from its pivotal influence on future sales to satisfied customers or their post-consumption behavioural intentions to repeat consumption of a product/service and/or to spread good reviews about a consumed product/service. Customer satisfaction and

patronage in general pertain to the evaluation of a product or its features. This understanding of customer satisfaction implies that the concept can be applied at the micro and macro levels, with the former pertaining to product features and the latter to the overall product. This study takes the overall satisfaction aspect of a hotel service as it is perceived in determining guests' image of and loyalty to a hotel and its services. Despite the number of studies in this area, the relationship between customer satisfaction, image, and loyalty remains equivocal. Some researchers have cited image as an antecedent to customer satisfaction and patronage (Clemes et al., 2009; Lai et al., 2009; Prayag, 2008), with satisfaction having a consequential positive impact on loyalty. On the other hand, others have perceived satisfaction to be a precursor to image and image together with satisfaction and patronage are factors impacting loyalty (Helgesen and Nettet, 2007; Kandampully and Hu, 2007).

Furthermore, Brunner et al. (2008) noted that the impact of customer satisfaction and image on loyalty varies with the nature of the customer. Experienced customers are loyal due to their image of a service, while new customers' loyalty is motivated by their level of satisfaction and patronage. An image is the sum of individuals' beliefs, ideas, and impressions of a place (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). Countryman and Jang (2006) used impressions in the hotel setting to connote guests' attitude toward a hotel. Despite the embedding of impression in the definition of image, such a concept appears to be short-term-oriented compared to an image, which is long-term-oriented (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998). One's impression of a hotel appears to be based on a reconnaissance of the environment, while a hotel's image goes beyond mere reconnaissance to include all accumulated information, whether based on firsthand experiences or communication processes (Gartner, 1993). Countryman and Jang (2006), in researching hotel guests' impressions of the hotel lobby, D. Jani noted that those impressions depend on atmospheric elements that include style, layout, colors, and lighting, and did not consider other sources of information as well as past experiences that could alter guests' image of a hotel over time. The cumulative approach of image is supported by Assael (1984) in his assertion that global perception of a product that includes an overall image develops overtime rather than via a "one shot on the spot" perception. Armed with this understanding of hotel image, this study asserted that customers' satisfaction with a hotel influences the cumulative or overall image of that hotel.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was an ex-post facto design. The study was conducted at Beni Gold Hotel and Apartment and Integrity Hotel & Suites in Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of management staffs from the two aforementioned hotels, respectively. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 40 respondents from each of the hotels, and this gave a sample size of 80 respondents, which was used for the study. The main instrument for the study was a questionnaire tagged "Role of Ambience on Customers' Patronage in Hotel Industry Questionnaire" (RACPHIQ). A letter of introduction was given to the heads of the organisations for understanding and assistance. The questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher for data

collection, was administered to the respondents and retrieved six days later from each respondent in the two selected hotels in Victoria Island, Lagos. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques, such as simple regression analysis, for testing the hypotheses. The test for significance was done at a 0.05 alpha level and at 68 degree of freedom.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry. In order to taste the hypothesis, simple regression was used to analyse the data. (see table 1)

Table 1: Simple regression of the influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry.

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.85a	0.71	0.71	1.23	0.71

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =78; N =80; critical r-value = 0.235**

The above table 1 shows that the calculated R-value 0.85 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.235 at 0.5 alpha level with 78 degree of freedom. The R-square value of 0.71 predicts 0.71 of influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is no influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry.

It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 2)

Table 2: Analysis of variance of the influence of décor on customer's satisfaction and patronage in hotel industry.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	286.28	1	286.28	190.39	.000b
Residual	117.28	78	1.51		
Total	403.56	79			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction and patronage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Lighting

The above table 2 presents the calculated F-value as (190.39) and the critical f-value as (.000b). Being that the critical f-value (.000b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is no significant difference in the influence exerted by the independent variables (décor.) on the dependent variable which are customer's satisfaction and patronage.

Discussion of Findings

The finding is in agreement with the opinion of Wakefield & Blodgett (1994), who avowed that décor contributes to the attractiveness of the physical environment. While customers remain inside a hotel, they are likely to evaluate, consciously or subconsciously, the pleasant appearance of the interior designs as well as the quality of the materials used in construction, artwork, and decoration. Their evaluations of the attractiveness and overall aesthetic impression are influenced by various aspects of interior schemes as well as artifacts. At a hotel, the colour schemes of the dining area's walls, ceilings, wall decorations, pictures, paintings, plants, flowers, tableware (e.g., glass and silverware), linens (e.g. table cloths and napkins), floor coverings, and quality furniture can all play an important part in delivering an image and in creating an overall aesthetic impression (Bitner, 1992). The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion

The study concludes that décor contributes to the attractiveness of the physical environment. While customers remain inside a hotel, they are likely to evaluate, consciously or subconsciously, the pleasant appearance of the interior designs as well as the quality of the materials used in construction, artwork, and decoration.

Recommendations

1. Hotels' managers should not dismiss the importance of decor in their continual attempts to provide the best quality service based on their own understanding of service quality. Hence, decor cannot be ignored in the realm of achieving effective customer patronage in hotels.
2. Hotels should arm themselves with modern equipment in order to be relevant and remain competitive in the industry. In order words, ambient conditions and luxurious environment create delight in the minds of customers. These should be the priority in the minds of hotel investors.

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