

ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FACILITIES IN SELECTED HOTELS IN IKEJA, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

The research is about Hospitality and Information Technology facilities in Hotels. It identifies the Information Technology facilities in use in these hotels, to assess the competence of staff to use the facilities and to find out the purpose for which the facilities are used in hotels and also to assess the relevance of Information Technology facilities to the hotel operation and explore constraints to the effective use of these facilities. Six selected hotels were used for the study. Two hundred and ten questionnaires were distributed to both guests and staff of these six hotels and one hundred and eighty questionnaires were received and analysed statistically using frequency distribution, Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the hypothesis was analysed using T-Test. Results showed that not all the hotels had Information Technology facilities in use for their guests and staff could not use these facilities for easy service delivery. In conclusion, Information Technology facilities in hotels do not influence customer inflow but influence easy service delivery and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Information Technology, ICT facilities, Hospitality, customer satisfaction, Service delivery

Introduction

Hospitality is the relationship between a guest and a host, or the act or practice of being hospitable; that is, the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, resorts, clubs and any other position that deals with tourists. Hospitality is also known as the act of generosity providing care, kindness to whoever is in need (www.en.wikipedia.com, 2009).

Hotel is an institution of commercial hospitality which offers its facilities and services for sale individually or in various combinations and this concept is made of several elements. It is an establishment that provides

accommodation, food and drink for travelers (Medlik, 2010).

Hospitality has become an industry that plays an important role in many countries especially as globalization of the business world had been prospering over the past years and in Nigeria in particular. The industry provides facilities for the transaction of business, conferences, meetings, recreation, entertainment, events and celebrations at any level/magnitude or sphere of life (Boniface, 2000). The hospitality industry is made up of various departments that work together to achieve the goal of making a home away from home which is the main objective of the industry.

Information Technology (IT) is the study, design, development, implementation, support or management of information system and it is a general term that describes any technology that helps to produce, manipulate, store, communicate and/or disseminate information (www.en.wikipedia.com.2011).

Today, Information Technology involves more than just computer literacy, it also takes into account how computers work and how these computers can further be used not just for information processing but also for communications and problem solving tasks as well. With the aid of Information Technology we are not only able to stream line our business processes but we are also able to get constant information in 'real time' that is up to the minute and up to date. The significance of Information Technology can be seen from the fact that it has penetrated almost every aspect of our daily lives from business to leisure and even society. However, Information Technology has made the delivery of service very easy and efficient in hospitality industry (Clayton, 2006).

Significance of Study

The significance of the study is to identify the functional

Information Technology facilities in selected hotels in Ikeja, Lagos and derive the benefits from using ICT by these hotels to make bookings easy, improve customer relation, enhance feedback from customers and make the hotel more popular and visible.

Objectives of the study

Due to the significance of Information Technology in hotels, this study aims at:

- Assessing the competence of staff who use the facilities
- Finding out the purpose of which the facilities are used for in hotels
- Assessing the relevance of the Information Technology facilities to the hotel operation
- Exploring constraints to the effective use of the facilities

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to six selected hotels in Ikeja/Lagos with the use of Information Technology in these hotels and staff and guests serving as respondents to the questions raised in this research work.

Literature Review

Information Technology is the use of computers and software to manage information. In the broadest sense, Information Technology refers to both the hardware and software that are used to store, retrieve and manipulate information. At the lowest level you have the servers with an operating system installed on these servers are things like database and web serving software. The servers are connected to each other and to users via a network infrastructure. And the users accessing these servers have their own hardware, operating system and software tools (Wikipedia, 2011).

It is on record that the electronic digital computer made its first appearance in Nigeria in 1963, in connection with the analysis of the 1962/63 national census data. In the 10yrs between 1963 and 1973, the total computer population in the country stood at 20-25, with some of these being associated with the multinational companies. By 1977, the total number of installation had grown to around 70. It was by this time that many Universities, government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA), including the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) and the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), as well as many banks and commercial

firms began to show interest in computers (*Copulshy and Wolf, 1990*). Up to 1977, there were only three computer vendors in Nigeria. They were JCL, IBM and NCR, and all were the local subsidiaries of overseas computer manufacturers dealing almost entirely with mainframes and minicomputers (*Osuji, 1986*).

The competition in the industry led to more aggressive marketing policies. As a result, the number of computer installations in the country rose sharply. Whereas 39 computers were installed in 1975-1977, 1978-1980 witnessed the addition of 197 new installations. There were 149 new installations in 1981-1983, and a further 99 in 1984-1986. Already by the end of 1982, the price of crude oil was dropping sharply in the spot market, and this marked the beginning of the foreign exchange and the attendant import restrictions (*Osuji, 1986*).

Our world today has changed a great deal with the aid of Information Technology. Things that were once done manually or by hand have now become computerized operating systems, which simply require a single click of a mouse to get a task completed with the aid of Information Technology, we are not only to stream line our business processes but we are also able to get constant information. Personal PCs, cell phones, fax machines, pagers, email and internet have all not only become an integral part of our very culture but also play an essential role in our day to day activities. Some of the advantages of Information Technology include; Globalization, communication, cost effectiveness, bridging the cultural gap, more time, creation of new jobs, privacy, job security (*Kenneth, 2006*).

Information Technology centres provides training as well as allows people to do word processing, send and checking of electronic mails otherwise known as emails, and browsing the internet. Overall usage of Information Technology in Nigeria is widespread but the depth is very shallow. The reasons for these, which are similar to those in other developing countries, includes; very low literacy level, extremely low density of telecommunication facilities and services, underdeveloped computing infrastructures and culture, government regulations, corruption in both public and private organizations, and lack of a coordinated nation Information Technology policy (*Oslen, 2008*).

Currently, there are a number of agencies offering the industry the opportunity to market hotels on the Worldwide Web. These systems also offer the facility to make direct reservation of hotel accommodation. The benefit of this

approach is that it is available to anyone having access to the internet (Caserani *et al.*, 2009). The reservation systems available in hotels include property management system, electronic point of sale (EPOS) system, stock-control systems, food and beverage management systems, menu engineering, dietary analysis, event management systems, generic software, computer (Global distribution system) – GDS (Shekher, 2008).

Methodology

The information was obtained through questionnaire purposely designed for staff and guests in the six selected hotels studied. One hundred and eighty questionnaires (180) were administered to the staff and guests. The data collected were analysed with T-Test and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion

From the findings of the study, it was discovered through the demography of the respondents that the male population was more than the female, this shows that guests in these hotels were mostly men and between the ages of 18 to 25.

Also, it was discovered that hotels in Ikeja, Lagos have e-mail (98.9%) as the most common information technology facility as reported by the staff. Electronic mail is said to be a very easy and fast way of communication between staff and also between guests. It is very cheap, easy and fast means of communication.

The guests perceived the wireless connections in most of hotels under study to be very effective. Another common Information Technology facility in the hotels is electronic checkout system, this system enables staff to check in and out guests within a short time.

Another major finding of this study is that staff of these hotels demonstrates high computer use skills. Data analysis revealed that 70 percent of the staff respondents indicated they went through formal computer training while 75 percent of the staff respondents received on-the-job training in ICT/Computer use. This implies that the hotels management considers computer/ICT training to be effective and efficient to hotel services, hence the introduction on staff training.

Also, it was discovered that the major purpose of ICT use in these hotels is for booking. Lodging is the major business of hotels and electronic booking is a major exercise in these hotels. Furthermore, ICT is used for communication purpose as indicated by 96 percent of staff respondents. This is established by the popularity of electronic mail practiced among the staff and guests.

Customer relation is the most relevant advantage of Information Technology because it makes communication between the staff and guests fast and very easy with the use of email, internet etc. Information Technology facilities allow a rapid increase in the number and amount of bookings which leads to the growth of the hotel.

The study explores constraints to the effective use of the Information Technology facilities, the constraints are factors that hinder the effective use of Information Technology in hotels, the common constraints in using Information Technology is the complexity of the facilities. Most Information Technology facilities are complicated and hence require training for their use and after the training most staff still find it difficult to understand. On the part of the guests, some of them don't really know how to use these facilities because of their complexity and they don't have any training on how to use them. From the findings of the study, it is established that Information Technology is the backbone of any hotel services; also it is apparent that ICT is a motivational factor in hotel services because of the enhanced performance especially in the area of communication, booking, reservation, security and surveillance. Information Technology is necessary on day to day basis for booking, communication, reservation, internet facilities (Uzoamaka, 2001).

Table 1: Demographic Features of Guests

Guests	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	53	58.9
Female	37	41.1
Age:		
18-25	40	44.4
26-35	27	30.0
36-45	18	20.0
46-55	5	5.6
Marital Status:		
Single	35	38.9
Married	42	46.7
Separated	6	6.7
Widowed	7	7.8
Educational Background:		
WAEC/SSCE	6	6.7
NCE/OND	12	13.3
HND/BSc.	45	50.0
MSc. /MBA	26	28.9
Others	1	1.1
Nationality:		
Nigeria	79	87.8
Others	11	12.2

Table 2: Demographic Features of Staff

Staff	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	48	53.3
Female	42	46.7
Age		
18-25	20	22.2
26-35	55	61.1
36-45	15	16.7
Marital Status:		
Single	38	42.2
Married	50	55.6
Separated	2	2.2
Educational Background:		
WAEC/SSCE	20	22.2
NCE/ND	40	44.4
HND/B.Sc	17	18.9
MSc/MBA		
Others		
Nationality:		
Nigerian	81	90.0
Others	19	10.0
Working Experience:		
1-5	52	57.8
6-10	31	34.4
10-15	7	7.8

Table 3: Job Description for Staff

Job Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Manager and Supervisor	8	8.9
Chef and cook	12	13.3
Reception and receptionist	9	10.0
Waitress and bar tenders	22	24.4
Security	8	8.9
Accounting and human resources	13	14.4
Customer relation and Reservation	4	4.4
Guest service	4	4.4
Housekeeping	9	10.0

Table 5: Purpose of ICT Use in Hotels

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Electronic Booking	89	99
Communication	87	97
Security	78	87
Browsing the internet	84	94
Surveillance	67	75
Electronic sales	73	81
Others	61	77

Table 4: Information Technology present in the Hotels

	Staff Frequency	Percentage %	Guest Frequency	Percentage %
Email	89	98.9	79	87.8
Online booking	81	90.0	76	84.4
Gds	62	68.9	61	67.8
Cyber café	64	71.1	77	85.6
Internet	59	65.6	81	90.0
Wifi	82	92.2	83	92.2
Lan	62	68.9	82	91.1
Pms	65	72.2	66	73.3
E checkout	83	92.2	74	82.2
Others	63	70.0	54	60.0

Conclusion

Looking at the survey result with the general knowledge of Information Technology, ICT enhances services in these hotels but it does not determine customer in flow and it doesn't influence job efficiency, it could help to make work easy by doing a job that could

take hours to be reduced to minutes with the aid of Information Technology. Information Technology facilities should not be dependent on solely due to its constraints especially here in Nigeria where power failure, network failure, complexity, inability of customers to use these facilities etc. Information Technology helps in the

hospitality industry but for it to work effectively and efficiently depends on the hotel and its staff on how they can use it. Hotels can function with or without the use of Information Technology as long as they have the right staff and attitude.

Recommendations

The use of Information Technology facilities is very important in Hospitality industry to achieve maximum profit and promote the growth of the industry. The following recommendations based on the result of this study help the six selected hotels in Ikeja, Lagos (Sheraton, Protea, Hillcrest, Knightsbridge, Whitehouse and Lagos Airport Hotel).

- Hotels should employ experts in these Information Technology facilities to train their staff on how to use the facilities.
- Hotels should have an effective stand-by generator because of constant power failure.
- Hotels should have internet supply from reliable and trust worthy internet provider preferably more than two service providers in case of any malfunction in one.
- Hotel management should ensure that they make maximum use of these Information Technology facilities to profit their establishment.
- Hotels should ensure frequent servicing of these Information Technology facilities and also ensure that they are handled by experts to prevent frequent equipment breakdown.

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South Africa's Sun City to invest \$800 Million in Sri Lanka Tourism Industry

www.reuters.com

South Africa's Sun City resort will invest \$800 million in a tourism project in Sri Lanka, the head of the island nation's state-run tourism board said recently. Sun City resort is run by South African gaming and hotels group Sun International Ltd. It will be the largest ever investment in the country's leisure sector, which is booming since the end of a 25-years war in May 2009.

"Sun city of South Africa is now going to make an \$800 million investment in a 200-acre private property," Nalaka Godahewa, head of the tourism board told Reuters in an interview.

The investment will be made on Sri Lanka, s hotel city in Katana, a coastal town located 15 km north of the commercial capital, Colombo, he said.

"That decision is finalized. That is one of the biggest investments." Elanza Joubert, Sun City resorts deputy inventory manager at events and entertainment department, said in an e-mail response to Reuter's questions that the company would not comment on the plan until the New Year.

The government said in July 2011 it was expecting at least \$1.5 billion in foreign investment in a proposed "tourist city" that includes four five-star hotels, shopping and a convention centre in Katana.

Record Revenue, Arrivals

Sri Lanka has seen a remarkable rise in its post-war leisure industry with tourist arrivals expected hit a record 820,000 and revenue to rise to a record \$800 million, jumping 25 percent and 39 percent from a year earlier, respectively.

"Next year, more than the number, we are concerned about the revenue. So the expectation is to hit \$1 billion revenue and perhaps 950,000 arrivals," Godahewa said.

He expects 1.3 million tourist arrivals in 2013 and 1.6 million in 2014, gradually reaching the country's 2016 target revenue of \$1,000-\$1,100 per tourist.

Godahewa also said the tourism board is seriously considering security issues after a British tourist was killed recently.

"We have asked the defense authorities and all the security establishments to be supportive in protecting tourists as it is going to be a \$1 billion industry."

In January Sri Lanka signed agreements with Hong Kong-based Shangri-la Asia for a \$500 million complex with high-end retail facilities, deluxe apartments and a 500-room luxury hotel in Colombo and a 300-room city resort on approximately 100 acres in Hambantota on the southern coast.