

Research Paper

## Assessment of Customers' Awareness of Sustainable Practices in Selected Hotels in Lagos State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The limited public dissemination about environmental and sustainable practices is a contributing factor to the low awareness amongst customers. The objective of this paper is to determine customers' awareness of sustainable practices in selected hotels in Lagos State, Nigeria. Hotels were selected from four categories (International, National, Urban and Suburban hotels) as the research locale. Primary data was obtained from a questionnaire that was administered to guests staying at the selected hotels, while secondary data was drawn from relevant journals, materials and periodicals. Of a total of 500 questionnaires distributed, 403 were returned. The collected data were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics which included measures like frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Additionally inferential statistical tools such as Chi-square and logistic regression were employed to test the research hypotheses. The results reveal that that study model is statistically significant at the 0.05 significant level ( $\chi^2 = 314.038 > \chi^2 = 0.09, p > 0.05$ ). The sustainable practices identified included various aspects such as the use of energy-saving bulbs, the reuse of towel or bed linens, non-smoking rooms, use of water-saving showers, and hotel designs that harmonise with natural environment. The study therefore recommends that hotels owners should consistently promote the sustainable practices implemented in their hotels to enhance customer satisfaction and improve retention at all times.

**Keywords:** Sustainable practices, customer satisfaction, customer retention, hotel

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## **Introduction**

The adoption of sustainable practices within the hotel industry is increasingly being influenced by consumer choices and marketing strategies (Kotler, 2011). In developed nations, there is greater attention given to environmental concerns in business practices, in terms of community awareness and government regulations compared to developing nations (Lita et al., 2014). Environmental factors refer to aspects of the physical or built environment such as geographical location, transportation and communication. Given that tourism involves the interaction between people and the environment, the growth in tourist arrivals and tourism activities undeniably impacts the environment of the destination (SitiNabiha et al., 2011). Thus, the environmental repercussions of the expanding tourism sector have become a critical concern worldwide (Legrand et al., 2016).

According to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2014), approximately 5% of world's total pollutant emissions are associated with tourism. Hotels, being resource-intensive establishments, consume substantial amounts of electricity for their operations such as heating, air-conditioning, ventilation (HVAC), lighting, elevators and hot water supply (Gössling et al., 2012). Daily room cleaning, kitchen usage and laundry services significantly increase a hotel's water consumption per capita compared to residential usage (Gössling et al., 2012). Tourists, especially when visiting during a destination's dry season, tend to exacerbate already high water demands by using water excessively (Gössling, 2015). Furthermore, overnight visitors produce considerably more solid waste compared to local residents in the same area (Manomaivibool, 2015). His work revealed that across various accommodations types from guesthouses to luxury hotels, an average of 1.75 kg of solid waste is generated per guest, whereas households in the same area produce only 0.8 kg of waste per person.

Multiple studies on energy usage in hotels have indicated significant energy wastage due to reluctance in adopting best practices, which would potentially enhance energy efficiency and resource conservation, without compromising customer service (Chan & Kantamaneni, 2015; Gössling, 2015; Manomaivibool, 2015). The environmental impacts of typical hotel operations encompass greenhouse gas emissions resulting from energy consumption, extensive use of freshwater resources and waste generation. Given that environmental responsibility is considered as one of the foremost aspects of a tourism company's responsible behaviour, the hospitality industry cannot afford the financial and reputational risks associated with the lack of a strong environmental commitment (Mensah & Blackson, 2014).

Most lodging establishments have implemented sustainability programs aimed at reducing the environmental impact of their operations (Miao & Wei, 2013). Some of the most common sustainable hotel practices (SHP) include towel reuse, water conservation, recycling, waste reduction, and energy-efficient lighting (Han &

Hyun, 2018). These practices offer significant resource savings and existing literature has proven well-established benefits (Berezan et al., 2013). Hotel establishments are increasingly adopting sustainability initiatives in response to demands from stakeholders, including governments, business organisations, and informed consumers (Olanipekun, 2016). Green hotels are establishments committed to sustainable environmental practices to minimise energy and water consumption and reduce solid waste in their day-to-day operations (Green Hotels Association, 2017). Globally, there is heightened awareness about the effects of human activities towards the environment, including climate change, destruction of ozone layers, destruction of flora and fauna and excessive use of natural resources, especially water.

### **Statement of Problem**

The hotel industry is increasingly recognising the importance of environmental protection as it becomes more mindful of the impacts of its operations. To become more sustainable and environment-friendly, the stakeholders and industry players require both knowledge and resources to make informed environmental decisions (Kang et al., 2012). Additionally, to maintain competitiveness, hoteliers are showing a growing inclination toward adopting more stringent eco-friendly practices (Baca-Motes et al., 2013). There exist significant gains for hoteliers by enhancing operational efficiency and resource utilisation through structural improvements and guest services (Leonidou et al., 2015). However, despite substantial evidence supporting the necessity to making hotel operations more sustainable, many hoteliers are hesitant to embrace sustainable practices (Kang et al., 2012).

Various stakeholders in the hotel industry, including owners and marketers, advocate for the implementation of environmental management systems. However, proprietors often display reluctance in adopting sustainable practices (Chan, 2011; Chan & Kantamenehi, 2015). Chan (2011) identified reasons for this hesitancy including uncertainty about the outcomes, varying levels of support, and ambiguity in the guidance and standards related to sustainability initiatives. Hoteliers are concerned that guests might perceive these initiatives as a cost-cutting measure, leading to a perceived reduction in service standards, and potentially diminishing the hedonic experience. These concerns have been identified as obstacles to the adoption of sustainable practices (Baker et al., 2014). Thus, it is important to determine what the sustainable practices are, and the effects of such practice on customer satisfaction and retention.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the sustainable practices already in place at the selected hotels
2. Determine customers' awareness of the sustainable practices in the selected hotels

## Research Hypotheses

Based on the preceding discussion, we hypothesise that there is no significant relationship between customers' awareness of sustainable practices and their perception about the importance of sustainable practices in the hotels.

## Literature Review

Public concern regarding the environment has been on the rise in past decades. 2016 was recorded as the warmest year since temperature records began in 1880 (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2018). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has reported that GHG emissions pose a significant threat to the sustainability of life on Earth resulting in "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (O'Neill et al., 2017). GHG measurements revealed record-high carbon dioxide concentrations (CO<sub>2</sub>) at 407.62 ppm, providing indisputable evidence of global warming (O'Neill et al., 2017). Moreover, The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported that climate-related disasters, such as droughts and water security issues, in the United States in 2017 were the costliest on record totalling \$306 billion for the year (NOAA, 2018).

Cape Town, South Africa, which has also been grappling with a severe drought, was projected to run out of water in April 2018, marking it a historic occurrence for a major metropolitan city (Harding, 2018). In a related manner, Hardin (2009) underscored the alarming consequence of reckless natural resource consumption, noting that natural science alone cannot provide technical solutions to mitigate environmental destruction. Many environmentalists argue that relying solely on technology is insufficient to reduce the harmful impacts of human activities on the environment. Instead, they advocate for a shift in behaviour toward sustainable practices and environmentally responsible purchasing (Han & Hyun, 2018).

Applying the "green" notion in human action requires environmental knowledge. This awareness does not develop on its own, rather it requires encouragement so that people can comprehend its significance in order to preserve the ecosystem and coexist peacefully with other creatures (Omoogun et al., 2016). Green business practices include the strategies organisations employ to prevent environmental degradation and maintain well-being of both humans and the environment, ultimately benefiting their consumers (Weng et al., 2015). Thus, the effectiveness of current green practices greatly depends on the level of environmental awareness, as the execution and optimisation of existing green practices become challenging (Goyal, 2013).

Green hotel knowledge is defined as consumers' self-perceived understanding of facts, concepts, and connection related to the impact of hotels on the natural environment (Fryxell & Lo, 2003). Extensive research in consumer behaviour literature has explored the influence of consumer knowledge and its implications. Studies show that consumer knowledge plays a pivotal role across all stages of the consumption process, particularly when consumers engage with the market or product information (Lin & Chen, 2006). This influence is significant because knowledge can either reinforce or undermine the effectiveness of a brand's message (Naderi et al., 2018). Thus, a high level of product knowledge empowers consumers to process brand information and make decisions more efficiently.

Moreover, alignment between consumer knowledge and brand information enhances favourable brand evaluations, simplifies judgement, and facilitates the decision-making processes. Thus, consumers' product knowledge is a critical factor when making purchases, especially for luxury products and green hotel stays (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). For instance, tourists exhibit a greater willingness to be environmentally friendly when they consider themselves to be knowledgeable about the specifics of green hotels and their eco-friendly practices (Chen & Peng, 2012). Consumer knowledge also becomes relevant in assessing risk perceptions of luxury hotels implementing environmentally friendly measures. In such cases, consumers must process new information, and rely on their green hotel knowledge to evaluate the revised brand image and offerings of luxury hotels (Chen & Peng, 2012).

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Study Area**

The research took place in Ikeja, the capital city of Lagos State in southwestern Nigeria. Lagos stands out as one of the world's swiftly developing urban centres and serves as prominent financial hub in the African continent. Lagos State is made up five administrative divisions, namely IBILE (Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos Island and Epe). Fishing, farming and trading form the major economic activities of the inhabitants in this state.

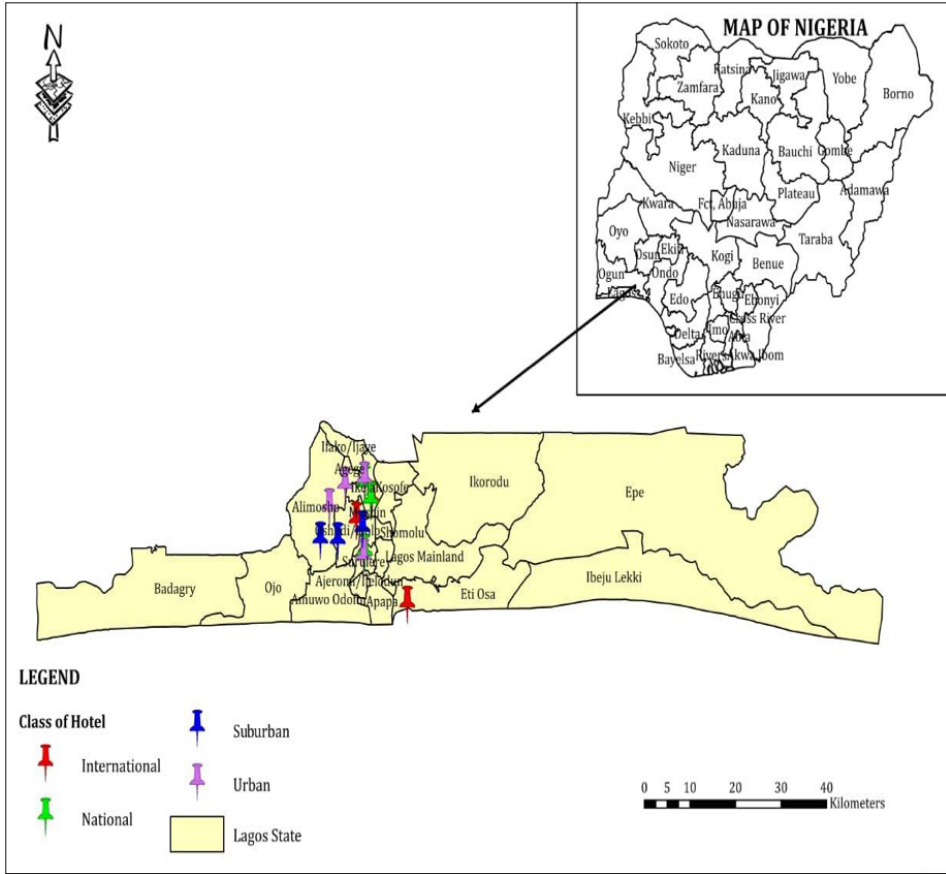


Figure 1. Map of selected hotels

**Research Design**

The study assessed customers’ awareness of sustainable practices in the selected hotels of Lagos State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive research design, data were gathered on social demographic attributes as well as awareness of sustainable practices such as use of energy-efficient bulbs, practices related to conserving water, waste management and reduction, as well as reuse and recycling.

**Source of Data**

The survey method was selected because it was considered the most effective approach for reaching a significant number of respondents. To obtain rich insights, the research utilised both primary and secondary data. Primary data were acquired through a questionnaire distributed to a diverse group of hotel guests including first-

time visitors and repeat guests. Secondary data were gathered from pertinent books, journal publications and online sources.

The study's population primarily comprised individuals, aged 18 and above, who frequented hotels in Lagos State. There are 1,011 registered hotels in Lagos State. Sixteen (16) hotels were randomly selected from the different categories of hotels in Lagos State: three (3) from international hotels (IN), four (4) from national hotels (N), six (6) from urban hotels (U) and three (3) from suburban hotels (SB). A total of 500 questionnaires were administered at these hotels and 403 were returned. The selection of hotels and respondents involved two stages:

Stage 1: This involved the mapping the number of hotels and their categories in Lagos State. The total number of registered and non-registered hotels in Lagos State was 1,011.

Stage 2: Using a simple random sampling technique known as the "Hat-drawn method", respondents were selected. This approach was chosen to ensure that every guest across the various hotels categories had an equal opportunity to be chosen. In this method, numbered pieces of papers were placed in a container. Individuals who drew papers with odd number were then included in the study. The process was repeated until the required number of respondents was reached. This rigorous procedure guaranteed a thorough random selection, a crucial aspect of the research process.

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Version 23.0) for quantitative analysis. The study employed a combination of inferential and statistical tools for analysis. Descriptive statistics including frequency count, mean, percentage and standard deviation, were used to help attain the research objectives. The research hypotheses, on the other hand, were tested using the Chi-square test.

## Results

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents were males, constituting 52.4% of the sampled population, while females represented 47.5%. Regarding the age of the respondents, the bulk of the respondents fell in the age group of 20-50 (84.1%). The results for marital status indicate that married people visit hotel more than the single, divorced, or separated individuals. For the educational level, the majority (74.9%) had attained tertiary level education. This indicates that hotel guests are well educated and thus have some knowledge and understanding of the hospitality industry, which made a meaningful impact on the questionnaires.

Monthly incomes were over NGN50,000 as most of them were private sector workers (33%) while those self-employed made up 28.3%. However, all the respondents represented the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. This illustrates a clear and well-represented sample. In terms of religion, the majority of the

respondents were Christians accounting for 71%, while Muslims made up 26.3%, and traditional worshipers represented 2.7%. This reaffirms that individuals from all religious background avail themselves of hotel services in Lagos State, Nigeria.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

	International Hotel		National Hotel		Urban Hotel		Suburban Hotel	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	65	62.5	51	52	46	52.3	49	43.4
Female	39	37.5	47	48	42	47.7	64	56.6
<b>Age</b>								
Below 20	4	3.8	5	5.1	6	6.8	9	7.9
21–30	23	22.1	25	25.5	34	38.6	12	10.6
31–40	47	45.2	40	40.8	27	30.7	36	31.9
41–50	21	20.2	23	23.5	15	17.1	36	31.9
51–60	9	8.6	4	4.1	5	5.7	15	13.3
Above 60	0	0	1	1.0	1	1.1	3	2.7
<b>Marital status</b>								
Single	36	34.6	32	32.7	32	36.4	27	23.9
Married	62	59.6	62	63.3	44	50.0	64	56.6
Divorced	4	3.8	2	2.0	10	11.4	12	10.6
Widowed	2	1.9	2	2.0	2	2.3	10	8.9
<b>Occupation</b>								
Student	9	8.7	14	14.3	11	12.5	18	15.9
Self-employed	15	14.4	26	26.5	35	39.8	38	33.6
Public sector	22	21.1	25	25.5	16	18.2	27	23.9
Private sector	56	53.8	30	30.6	25	28.4	22	19.5
Unemployed	2	1.9	3	3.1	1	1.1	8	7.1
<b>Level of Education</b>								
No Formal Ed	2	1.9	1	1.0	8	9.1	8	7.1
Primary	2	1.9	1	1.0	8	9.1	14	12.4
Secondary	12	11.5	7	1.0	16	18.2	22	19.5
Tertiary	88	84.6	89	90.8	56	63.6	69	61.1

**Table 1.** (cont)

	International Hotel		National Hotel		Urban Hotel		Suburban Hotel	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Income (NGN)</b>								
Less 50,000	13	12.5	25	25.5	25	28.4	25	22.1
50,000–100,00	24	23.1	16	16.3	22	25	20	17.7
101 k–150,000	14	13.5	8	8.2	15	17.0	19	16.8
151 k–200,000	22	21.2	24	24.5	16	18.2	21	18.6
More than 200 k	31	29.8	25	25.5	10	11.4	28	24.8
<b>Religion</b>								
Christianity	77	74.0	80	81.6	56	63.6	73	64.6
Islam	25	24.0	17	17.3	28	31.8	36	31.8
Traditional	2	1.9	1	1.0	4	4.5	4	3.5
<b>Nationality</b>								
Nigerian	98	94.2	96	98	80	90.9	106	93.8
Foreigner	6	5.8	2	2	8	9.1	7	6.2
<b>Visit</b>								
First time	67	64.4	52	53.1	41	46.6	43	38.1
Repeat visit	37	35.6	46	46.9	47	53.4	70	61.9

**Customer’s Awareness of Sustainable Practices**

Table 2 illustrates customers’ awareness of sustainable practices in selected hotels including towel or bed linen reuse, non –smoking room, energy-saving light bulbs, use of water-saving shower and flush tanks, environmentally friendly products etc.

**Table 2.** Awareness of sustainable practices

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	St. Dev	Rank
Guest are aware of energy-saving light bulbs	12(3%)	10 (25%)	31 (7%)	166 (41.2%)	184 (45.7%)	4.26	0.917	14

**Table 2.** (cont)

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Guests are briefed about the occupancy sensors which shut down electricity once guests leave the room	21 (5.2%)	52 (12.9%)	62 (15.4%)	114 (23.8%)	154 (38.2%)	3.81	1.221	14
Towel or bed linen are reused without laundry	10 (2.5%)	11 (2.7%)	24 (6.0%)	149 (37.0%)	209 (51.9%)	4.33	0.897	1
Guest are aware of local environmentally friendly products	10 (2.5%)	14 (3.5%)	57 (14.1%)	184 (45.7%)	138 (34.2%)	4.06	0.920	5
Guests are shown pleasant design such as landscape	10 (2.5%)	36 (8.9%)	60 (14.9%)	162 (40.2%)	135 (35.5%)	3.93	1.031	9
Architectural design of hotel compatible with natural environment	7(1.7%)	24 (6%)	54 (13.4%)	170 (42.2%)	147 (36.5%)	4.06	0.945	5
Provision of bulk soap and shampoo dispenser and removal of individual bottles	13 (3.2%)	46 (11.4%)	46 (11.4%)	147 (36.5%)	151 (37.5%)	3.94	1.113	8
Use of water-saving shower, facets and flush tanks	12 (3%)	21 (5.2%)	42 (10.4%)	168 (41.7%)	160 (39.7%)	4.09	0.885	4
Guest are aware of non-smoking room	3 (0.7%)	29 (7.2%)	12 (3%)	177 (43.9%)	182 (45.2%)	4.25	0.879	3
Developing an environmental recycling program and encouraging guests to use recycling bin	7 (1.7%)	34 (8.4%)	77 (19.1%)	125 (31%)	160 (39.7%)	3.98	1.041	7

**Table 2.** (cont)

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Supply of electricity from renewable energy resources	15 (3.7%)	58 (14.4%)	90 (23.3%)	123 (30.5%)	117 (29%)	3.67	1.149	11
Designing environmental education programs and activities	8 (2%)	47 (11.7%)	100 (24.8%)	128 (31.8%)	120 (29.8%)	3.75	1.065	10
Encouraging guests to use public transportation	43 (10.7%)	72 (17.9%)	83 (20.6%)	121 (30%)	84 (20.8%)	3.33	1.276	15
Use of solar power instead of fuel	23 (5.7%)	106 (26.3%)	79 (19.6%)	97 (24.1%)	98 (24.3%)	3.36	1.255	12
Scale Statistic	Variance		Std Dev		No of items			
54.801	80.299		8.96		15			

Based on Table 2, the mean values ranged from 3.331 to 4.328. The highest mean value was for reuse of towel or bed linen without laundry (mean = 4.328), followed by non-smoking room (mean = 4.25), guest are aware of energy-saving light bulbs (mean = 4.239), guest are exposed to water-saving showers, facets & flush tanks (mean = 4.097), architectural design of hotel compatible with natural environment (mean = 4.060), local environmentally friendly products (mean = 4.057), developing an environment recycling program (mean = 3.983), provision of bulk soap and shampoo dispenser and removal of individual bottles (mean = 3.935), guests are shown pleasant design such as landscape (mean = 3.930), guests are briefed about occupancy sensors which shut down electricity once they leave the room (mean = 3.811), designing environment education program (mean = 3.754), supply of electricity from renewable energy resources (mean = 3.667), use of solar power instead of fuel (mean = 3.356) and encouraging guest to use public transportation (mean = 3.331).

The results imply that guests are aware of energy-saving bulbs, reuse of bedding, towels and cutlery, non-smoking room, and water-saving practices through hotel staff, other guests, website, advert and print media. However, guests were not aware of other practices such as re-cycling of water from the kitchen and laundry for watering of landscaping, harvesting of grey water, reduce, reuse and recycle of waste, installation of solar energy source, planting of flowers and trees that can will attract butterflies and birds for photosynthesis, paper straws and conservation of wildlife.

These sustainable practices help reduce or prevent pollution and biodegradation of earth's natural resources.

**Relationship between Customers' Awareness of Sustainable Practices and their Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Table 3 shows the Chi-square test results on the relationship between selected socio-demographic characteristics and awareness of sustainable practices in hotels. The results reveal that there is significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ) between Status, Marital, Income and Visit and Level of awareness.

**Table 3.** Relationship between customer awareness and socio-demographic characteristics

Independent Variable B	S.E	Wald	Sig Value	Exp B	Decision	
Hotel	-0.264	0.138	3.778	0.052	0.765	NS
Status	1.253	0.573	4.792	0.029*	3.502	S
Gender	0.269	0.276	0.948	0.330	1.308	NS
Age	-0.210	0.143	0.022	0.881	0.978	NS
Origin	0.023	0.017	1.828	0.176	1.023	NS
Marital	0.433	0.215	4.052	0.044*	1.542	S
Occupation	-0.164	0.136	1.450	0.229	0.849	NS
Education	-0.028	0.177	0.026	0.873	0.972	NS
Income	-0.386	0.123	9.872	0.002**	0.680	S
Religion	0.156	0.292	0.287	0.592	1.169	NS
Nationality	-0.568	0.723	0.617	0.432	0.567	NS
Visit	-0.565	0.297	3.611	0.057*	0.569	S
Constant	-1.392	1.435	0.942	0.332	0.248	NS
Chi-square	42.056					
-2Loglikelihood	314.038 <sup>a</sup>					

Cox & Snell R square 0.099

Nagelkeke R square 0.169

Percentage correct 84.9%

The results suggest that elements such status, marital, income and visits as opposed to gender, age, occupation, education, religion, and nationality are significantly related in the study. The chi-square value generated was 314.038<sup>a</sup> with the degree of freedom,  $df = 42.056$ . As the chi-square value of 0.01 is less than the tabulated chi-square value of 0.05, hence the null hypothesis,  $H_0$ , is therefore rejected because there is no significant relationship between customer awareness with

socio-demographic characteristics while the alternate hypothesis, H1 is accepted because there is significant relationship between some socio-demographic elements and customer awareness.

## DISCUSSION

### **Socio-demographic Characteristic of Respondents**

The findings reveal that male respondents (52.4%) visit hotels more than females (47.6%). This aligns with the estimated sex ratio of 1.06 male/female in Nigeria (CIA, 2020). The lower number of female respondents could be attributed to Nigeria's societal norms where women primarily fulfil domestic roles and are discouraged from visiting hotels due to the stigma associated with these places as unclean or linked to prostitution. The higher proportion of respondents was in the 20–50 age group (84.1%). This indicates that individuals in this age group are in their prime years of productivity and display a propensity for a fun and social life style. This finding corroborates with Arowosafe et al. (2020) who reported that the highest percentage of visitors in tourist destinations were 21–40 years old. It is also supported by Akinyemi's (2016) work that reported individuals in these age groups are in their active and productive years. A higher proportion of married people visited hotels compared to those single, divorced or separated. This is consistent with the report of Akinyemi (2016) that being married serves as a measure to social status in southwestern Nigeria.

The study also revealed that the majority of respondents either work in the private sector (33%) or are self-employed (28.3%). This is an indication that Lagos State is a growing hub that encourages entrepreneurship and industrialisation. Regarding the level of education, the higher proportion of respondents have attained tertiary education (74.9%), consistent with national illiteracy rate of (61.3%) as reported by CIA (2016). This also shows that prospective guests at various hotels in Lagos state are well educated and thus, have the knowledge and understanding of hospitality industry which made a meaningful impact to the questionnaire. Similarly, Arowosafe et al. (2020) reported that educated people would be able to interpret survey questions well, which is consistent with the study by Phumsathan (2010) who highlighted that visitors who react to physical conditions were greatly shaped by their educational backgrounds and income levels.

The majority of respondents earned a monthly income less than NGN50,000 (21.8%) or above NGN200,000 (23.3%). This result also suggests that prospective hotel guests are from the middle class or rich group. With regard to religious affiliation, the higher number of respondents were Christians (71%) followed by Muslims (26.3%) and traditional belief (2.7%), respectively. This is not consistent with the estimated national religious adherents: Muslim – 50%, Christian – 40%,

and indigenous belief – 10% (CIA, 2016). The lower number of Muslims could be attributed to the fact that the majority of Muslims regard hotels as an unclean place, associated with prostitution and selling of alcohol and cigarette, which is forbidden in that religion.

The bulk of the respondents were Nigerians (94.3%) compared to foreigners (5.7%). A higher proportion of the respondents were Yoruba-speaking people (60%). This aligns with Ogunjinmi and Charity (2018) who reported that Nigerians are predominantly (67.7%) from the Yoruba ethnic group, which is also the dominant ethnic group in Lagos State. The proportion of first-time and repeat visitors were (50.4%) and (49.6%), respectively. This suggests that the expectations of prospective hotel guests tend to differ and this can affect future repeat visits.

### **Awareness of Sustainable Practices**

The study revealed that respondents are aware of some of the common sustainable practices in hotels such as reuse of bedding and towel, energy-saving bulbs, non-smoking room, water-saving shower, facets and flush tank, local environmentally friendly products, architectural design of hotel that is compatible with the natural environment, and use of locally sourced food, through hotel staff, hotel guests, websites, adverts, and print media. However, they are not aware that other practices such as recycling of water from kitchen and laundry, harvesting of grey water, solar energy, upcycling of kitchen waste/ waste control for fertiliser, nylon and cartons, planting of selected plants and trees that can attract pollinators such butterflies and birds, paper straw and conservation of wildlife within hotel grounds.

Environmental awareness is crucial for helping people to understand the significance of preserving our environment and coexisting peacefully with other creatures (Omoogun et al., 2016). Undoubtedly, the rise in consumer awareness of sustainable practices has contributed to the growing popularity of eco-friendly products and services such as eco-friendly hotels. According to the Green Hotels Association, an eco-friendly hotel is an ecologically-aware property that conducts programs and initiatives aimed at preserving energy, reducing water consumption and minimising solid waste. These efforts not only help protect the environment but also lead to cost savings.

The level of awareness as demonstrated by this study concurs with past work such as Berezan et al. (2013) as well as Miao and Wei (2013), who noted while guest awareness of environmental degradation is well documented, there is limited research on specific factors motivating guests to engage in sustainable hotel practices. Past studies (Leonidou et al., 2015; Miao & Wei, 2013; Millar et al., 2012), have primarily focused on the environmental aspect of sustainability. In another study, Robinot and Giannelloni (2010) examined the link between green practices and

customer satisfaction, but did not explore the comprehensive range of green practices or of specific categories. Similarly, Millar and Baloglu (2011) studied hotel guest preference for environment friendly room attributes but only among respondents willing to stay in these rooms, thus limiting generalisability. In another study, Baloglu and Jones (2014) concentrated on upscale and luxury properties only, specifically investigating energy management program without considering other practices. Pereira-Moliner et al. (2015) analysed the impact of environmental proactivity on business performance but did not consider customer perspectives.

In this context, hotel establishments can benefit from publicising their environmental awareness programmes and eco-friendly measures or practices (Millar & Baloglu, 2011; Gebrechorkos et al., 2020). However, some studies reveal that although consumers are aware of environmental issues, they may not prioritise sustainable practices when choosing accommodation and may prefer conventional hotels (Kasim et al., 2014). Furthermore, guests are often unaware that an establishment holds an eco-certificate (Fairweather et al., 2005).

Therefore, when educating customers about environmental sustainability, it is vital to develop effective communication strategies to encourage eco-friendly behaviour among hotels guests. Ensuring the credibility of green practices i.e., sustainable practices is also a significant concern for hotels (Shin et al., 2021). Effective green practices can only be established if there is a foundation of environmental awareness. Without such awareness, the current practices cannot be effectively implemented or optimised (Goyal, 2013). However, there has been a dearth of information on customer awareness of sustainable practices in Lagos State, Nigeria. Thus, this paper bridges the existing gap of existing literature regarding customers' awareness of sustainable practices in selected hotels in Lagos State.

The study can also serve as a guide to hoteliers and industry stakeholders to consolidate their strategy for awareness of sustainable practises to hotel guests through various marketing and promotional formats (magazine, fliers, staff, website etc). In this manner, hotels can successfully retain their customers and experience high patronage as well as expand their market by attracting new guests who are environmental conscious.

## Conclusion

The study examined the socio-demographic characteristic of guests and their awareness of sustainable practices in selected hotels in Lagos State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, hoteliers should continue to publicise their sustainable practices to stay competitive, and to attract new market segments. To validate these findings, similar studies should be replicated in other states in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for the hotel industry in Lagos State, Nigeria.

1. Sustainable practices in hotels should be promoted through hotel staff, print media, website and other social media platforms
2. Regular training should be carried out to cultivate the importance of sustainable practices amongst hotel staff
3. Relevant government agencies should ensure the compliance of hoteliers to sustainable practices through certification processes and monitoring teams
4. Hotel guests should be educated on the importance of supporting the implementation of sustainable practices in hotels
5. More sustainable practices should be adopted and practised to support environmental protection as well as increase customer satisfaction and retention

### Further Research

Similar comparative studies may be carried out in other states or areas to identify other sustainable practices in terms of waste management (reduce, reuse and recycle) and conservation of energy (solar) in hotels.

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