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Influence of Cultural Nuances in Buying Decision of Customers for Leisure Hotels in Enugu State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study was carried out to determine the influence of cultural nuances in buying decision of customers for leisure hotels. A sample size of 375 was determined from the population of 6000, through a statistical tool. A structured questionnaire was used to collate data. Data collated was analyzed using frequency and percentage. Respondents revealed very positive response to the variables in each of the objectives in the analysis, which revealed that the variables were agents of buying decision of customers for leisure hotels. Recommendations were made in line with the findings of the research.

Keywords: Cultural Nuances, Buying Decision, Customers, Hotels, Enugu State, Nigeria.
Introduction

Cultural nuances are slight degree of different shared pattern of behavior and interaction, cognitive constructs, and effective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. These shared patterns identify the member of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group. Factors intervening consumer behavior consist of cultural and economical factors, but also industry related factors and what the destination has to offer Lomine and Edmund McCabe (1992), says that consumer behavior consist of the act of individuals in obtaining, using and disposing of economic goods and services including the decision process that proceed and determine these act.

This work was as a result of leisure hotel’s inability to ascertain and meet the relative needs of guests from different cultural backgrounds, inability of hotels to know why customers choose to be in a particular place and problem of hotels to know the right promotional tools to use. The essence of a hotel manager is to create customers because development and success of a hotel lie on the level of customer patronage. A manager is supposed to study his environment and use the shortfall of the environment to the advantage of his hotel. Today, many customers take decision for hotels based on cognitive orientation which goes to say that customers take decision for leisure hotels which will lead to high patronage because leisure hotels that were built based on the culture of the location of the hotels make it difficult for other leisure hotels. This is because consumers want or need something different or new from the already known, Kotler (1977). Consumers need brand and innovation that will showcase advantage for hotels. For example, hotels with cultural facilities, traditional dishes/cuisines, cultural dances and music and other cultural differences will serve as pull factors for customers or customers. In buying decision for leisure hotels which will lead to high patronage because leisure hotels that were built based on the culture of the location of the hotels make it difficult for other leisure hotels. For instance, after a vacation, the consumer usually comes up with an outcome on how the hotel choice matches his expectations. The outcome of the purchase can be seen as an experience that influences future consuming, schiffman (2012).

This is very peculiar with hotels in Enugu State, Nigeria. Many are becoming moribund because many still believe on strict service convention. These problems pose serious difficulties for hotels to face competition in our present bad economic situation. A review of therefore mentioned, suggest that different individual attributes and factors are used to choose a leisure hotel. The consumer decision making process while choosing a hotel is under the influence of important factors related to the characteristics of the hotel products, received information and personal preferences. It is on this vein that this study is on the influence of cultural nuances in buying decision for leisure hotels.

Consumer behavior is the sum total of a consumer’s attitude, preferences, intentions and decisions regarding the consumer’s behavior in the market place when purchasing a product or service. In recent times, interest is being focused on the influence of attitude of customer’s behavior in choice making. This has thrown light on the dynamic nature of customers’ patronage in hotels. Therefore, attitude may be formed towards people, products, services, distribution methods and wholesale of other phenomena that impinge on an individual life. According to Chisnal (1975), people’s behavior as buyers cannot be artificially violated from their characteristic behavior patterns. In agreement with this statement, marketers accept that products are bought for the satisfaction that consumers hope to obtain from them. These benefits are often more than physical, indeed, it has been noted by Cunningham, (1986), that “in economics of influences, consumption tends to place greater emphasis on physiological satisfaction, while Boone and Kurtz (1992), say that consumer behavior consist of the act of individuals in obtaining, using and disposing of economic goods and services including the decision process that proceed and determine these act.

Decision making is a mental activity, which is an integral part of planning and action taking his variety of contexts and at a vast range of levels including, but not limited to budgets, education planning and policy making climbing the career.
ladder, Mathew (2011). Explaining cultural differences in decision making using decision theory; CRC press pp17, accessed from https://www.crcpress.com/theory, on 4th April, 2016. In the highly competitive marketing environment of the hospitality industry, it is essential that hotels understand consumers and their decision making as they seek to gain a competitive advantage. The hoteliers with clear vision of consumer/guest needs will survive and progress. Understanding consumers in their decision making processes in order to predict their future intentions is vital to their business success. It is important for hotels to have insight into the general characteristics of their customers and allow them to understand the motivations, attitudes, values that shape consumer opinion, how and why they choose a particular leisure and what the motives and reasons in their purchase decisions. Bell and Morey, (1997), say that, in recent research into the hospitality industry, researchers have shown the use of product attributes in predicting consumer preferences. They also say that industry researchers tend to focus on motivation or product attributes in the hospitality industry which are relevant to the consumer’s decision making process. Hoteliers should site hotels in areas that will encourage prospective patrons to visit because location is part of the essential factor which strongly influences a tourist leisure hotel selection decision. For instance, study by Clow et al (1994), indicated that the important attributes influencing leisure travelers hotel choice were security, personal interaction and room rate. In the same vein, Lomine and Edmunds (2007), in their study concluded that branded hotels could have a significant effect on consumer decisions.

Problem recognition starts with a person either noticing a decision in his current state or craving for something newer and better. Consumer’s actual state can decline if they notice that a recently purchased product cannot fully satisfy their needs or if they run out of products that they need, Solomon (2013). While Schiffman (2012), says that recognition can be divided into two different types of situations between consumers; the first is called the actual state type, where the consumers’ notice their old purchases are not functioning in the way they hope and need to find something new to replace the old. The second is called a desired state type, which means the consumers’ make a purchase because they start craving for something new.

After a problem is recognized, the consumer is willing to search for more information visiting stores, going online or phoning friends. These information sources can be divided into four groups.

- **Personal** - Family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances
- **Commercial** - Advertising, web-sites, salesperson, dealers, packaging
- **Public** - Mass-media, consumer rating organizations
- **Experimental** - Handling, examining, using the product

Usually some basic information exists simply in normal life: purchases are made and different kinds of products and services being used. While making a purchase decision, consumers use memories and previous experiences from similar purchases to the new one. Nevertheless, consumers often need to find some new information either from friends, commercials or simply by observing other people. The existing information can be based on previous purchases or alternatively perceived passively from advertising, packages or through different kinds of promotional methods. This is also called unintended information obtaining. On the other hand, passively collected information is seldom used. In some cases, certain products or services are so well known that no outside information is needed. In expensive purchases, such as a family vacation abroad, there is a higher economic risk and therefore, consumers tend to use more complex processes in their information search and evaluating different alternatives compared to smaller low-risk purchases. These processes may contain searching several different information sources before the final decision is made. For example, when choosing the right hotel for a holiday, the customer might visit different travel sites on the internet comparing prices and locations, read feedback from previous customers, visit travel stores and ask recommendations from friends. Other factors that are likely to increase more complex information search are for example the high price of the purchase, frequent price changes, a first time purchase or no previous experience and differences in received information.

All consumers process differently information about brands and the final purchase situation. There are several different processes, but the most current models see the process as cognitively oriented. This means that the customer makes choices mainly on a conscious and rational basis. The main thing to understand is that the consumer is trying to satisfy a need, Kotler (1997).When a consumer gets to the point that they are comparing alternatives, they already have enough information about the different options. Different alternatives can represent different things. Usually it means a choice between competing brands, but not always. After comparing choices, the customer usually ends up with a rank order or with no satisfying solution. The choice criteria consist of those factors a consumer finds important in a product. Criteria can be the price, quality, color, safety, status, durability, guarantee, a nice salesperson and others. The significance of the criteria differs between different customers and situations, Bergstrom and Leppanen (1999). When making the final decision, the process may vary from complicated strategies to quick and easy decisions. It has been studied that consumers are more eager to choose products with many different features, but on the other hand, people are more satisfied with simplicity in the end. The purchase processes where the consumer spends a great deal of time and effort are a part of complicated decision making. Such purchases are for example, vacations and choosing the correct accommodation for a trip. These purchases are related to the consumer’s values, beliefs and attitude and contains bigger and more risks than ordinary routine shopping. There are several different risks that consumers take into account when making the product choice.

After making a purchase, the consumer tends to compare the final outcome of the purchase to the expectations he had beforehand. For example, after a vacation, the consumer usually comes up with an outcome how the hotel choice matched his expectations. This is also called post purchase evaluation. There are three possibilities how the consumer feels about the
purchase. Firstly, the hotel choice might have been just what the traveler had thought, leaving him with a neutral feeling about the purchase. The second possibility is that the hotel was far greater than the traveler had expected, leaving him extremely satisfied with the choice he made. The third possible outcome is that the hotel choice did not match at all with the customer’s expectations, making them feel negative about the purchase. When the purchase has met expectations, it is likely that the consumer will make the same purchase again. There are several different things affecting people’s consumption habits. In this study, we will look at different factors that influence decision making in leisure hotels. We review three factors that influence consumers’ decision making process by Kotler (1997).

Family is one of the most important influencing factors. Many consumer decisions are made inside a small group, a family or a household. The behavior of a single family member may affect the purchase decisions of the rest of the family members. The advertisers have also marked the influence children have on a household’s consuming habits. Children also represent a large target market in themselves as they have their own money to spend and influence strongly to their parents selection of products and services, Foxall and Goldsmith (1994). Consumers tend to make purchases from companies and retailers that they feel can relate to and have a similar self-image. An individual’s self-image is developed through interaction with other people. Therefore, it can also be said that a single person can have several images, depending on the social situation they are in. In real life this can be seen when people tend to behave differently at work or with their family or friends. Each consumer has a unique self-image, a picture of himself with certain habits, skills and ways of behaving. Also brands have different values and meanings and consumers compare their personal picture with the brand image. In marketing, it is important to understand that people select brands that they feel they can relate to and that are congruent with their personal picture. Studies show that the importance of brand choice matching with the personal picture is more important to women than men, Solomon (2013).

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of cultural nuances in buying decision of customers for leisure hotels. The objectives were to determine reasons for consumer’s choice of choosing a particular leisure, determine the reasons in creating the differences in product and services, determine the problems associated in creating the differences and determine the best strategy to be adopted in creating differences in hotels.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a survey research design. Questionnaire was used to gather information from respondents. Sample of 375 was derived from a population of 6000. Questionnaire was developed for use of hotels on the Slovenian Coast. The questionnaire was used in order to evaluate the reasons for choosing a hotel and socio demographic data, how guest were invited by a front employer in the hotel reception to anonymously participate in the survey. The reason for choosing the hotel that were measured with the multiple choice questions: location, price, hotel facilities, promotion, recommendation of an acquaintance or a travel agency and prior personal experiences in this hotel. The descriptive and multivariate statistical analysis were performed using the software SPSS 19.0

Results and Discussion

Table 2 showed that 68.0% of the respondents stated that it is the quality product and services that decides their choices, 92.8% of the respondents said it was cultural differences, 80.0% said innovation in products and services, while 52.0% of respondents said their choice of a leisure depends on their preferences and choice of their destination. Table 1 provides solution in solving the problem of conventional system of operation in leisure hotel. This conforms with the opinion of Solomon (2013), which says that buying decision for leisure hotels is based on different kinds of products and services being used, and concluded that consumers often need to find some new products and services from leisure hotels, while Kotler (1999), says that leisure hotels must accept the norms set by culture or otherwise his products will not be purchased. Innovation in products and services was in line with Shiffman, (2012), that consumers need brand and innovation that is something different; and says that after a vacation , the consumer usually comes up with an outcome on how the hotel choice matches his expectations and concludes that the outcome of the purchase can be seen as an experience that influences future consuming, while Lomme and Edmund (2007), say that factors intervening consumer behavior consists of cultural and economic factors and also what the destination has to offer.

Table 2 showed that 73.3% of respondents stated that variety was reason for creating leisure. Variety is the spice of life, and as such variety in products and services make good leisure. 61.9% said it will enhance standardization in product and services, 80.8% said it will enhance quality products and services,76.5% of respondents stated that it will yield more customer satisfaction, while 95.0% said it will create innovation in products and services. Table 2 showed that the reason for creating cultural nuances was to distinguish products and services of leisure hotels which will enhance variety, quality, and customer satisfaction among others. This was in line with Shiffman (2012), that no consumer wants to spend his vacation on already existing or saturated experience and says that after making a purchase, the consumer tends to compare the final outcome of the purchase to the expectation he had beforehand. In this vein, Solomon. (2013), says that nevertheless, consumers often need to some new products and services from different leisure hotels, while Chisnal, (1973), opined that peoples’ behavior cannot be artificially violated from their characteristic behavior pattern, he says that in agreement with the statement, that marketers accept that products are bought for the satisfaction consumers hope to obtain from them and concludes that the benefits are often more than physical, while Cunnigham, (1986), noted that in “economics of influence”, consumption tends to place greater emphasis on physiological satisfaction.

Table 3 showed that 85.3% of the respondents said that innovation in products and services will be the best strategy and an advantage over their competitors, 76.0% stated that leisure facilities should value their customers and understand the
reason why they choose your products and services. 81.0% said it is to identify the various needs of guests, 65.3% stated that it is a strategy for standardization, while 78.8 said quality products and services are the best strategy to be adopted. Table 3 showed that the problems associated in meeting cultural nuances are misinterpretation, ignorance, cultural communication barriers, religion and custom, norms and tradition. Solomon (2013), says that problem recognition starts with a person either noticing a decision in his current state or craving for something newer or better, and says that consumer’s actual state can decline if they notice that a recently purchased product cannot fully satisfy their needs or if they run out of products that they need. Many leisure hotels find it difficult to interpret these challenges that customers face because of the above variables. Leisure hotels can surmount these variable problems if they segment and group them according to their weights, using the variables as benchmark for solving them. According to Shiffman (2010), problem recognition can be divided into two different types of situations between consumers; the first is called the actual state type, where the consumers’ notice their old purchases are not functioning in the way they hope and need to find something new to replace the old. The second is called a desired state type, which means the consumers make a purchase because they start craving for something new. It has become different for some leisure hotels.

Table 4 showed the strategies that should be adopted in meeting the needs of customers. In line with this, Kotler (1977), says that it has been studied that consumers are more eager to choose products with many different features. For instance, leisure hotels with cultural facilities, traditional dishes/cuisines, cultural dances and music and other cultural differences will serve as pull factors for customers and consumers. He says that in buying decision, for leisure hotels which will lead to high patronage because leisure hotels that were built based on the culture of the location of the hotel, makes it difficult for other leisure hotels, because customers need or want something different or new from the already known. In his view, Mininem, (2006), says that understanding consumers in their decision making processes, in order to predict their future intentions is vital to their business successes, and says that it is important for leisure hotels to have an insight into the general characteristics of their clients and allow them to understand the motivations, attitudes, and values that shape consumer opinion, how and why they choose a particular leisure hotel and what the motives and reasons in the purchase decisions are. For instance, study by Clow et al. (1994), indicates that the important attributes influencing leisure travelers hotel choice were security, personal interaction and room rate.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Cultural nuances play a vital role in buying decision of customers for leisure hotels, because it serves as a pull factor to consumers. Creating a difference with cultural nuances also plays a significant role in our leisure hotels in terms of product and services quality, standardization, innovation, and variety in products and services, which will help in meeting the customers’ needs and expectations, thereby satisfying the consumer of leisure hotels. Hotel operators should distinguish their products and services from their competitors in order to create a difference in their products and services because customers will always look out for something new from their past experiences.

From the above study, it is unequivocal that much needs to be done to improve leisure hotels through cultural nuances to influence customers their buying decision. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Leisure hotels should package their products and services according to the cultural base of their host communities. Leisure operators should make innovation part of their policy, in order to create variety in their products and services. Operators should create incentives for their patrons to make the pull factors very effective. Operators should find a way of tackling their success barriers to enable them surmount their challenges.

References

Kotler, P. (1997), Marketing Management analysis, planning, implementation and control. Prentice Hall International
### Tables

**Table 1: Reasons for consumer choice of choosing a particular leisure hotel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quality products and services</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cultural nuances</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Innovation in products and services</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preferences and choice</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field study.

**Table 2: Reason in creating the differences in product and services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standardization</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Quality product and services</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Customer’s satisfaction</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Innovation in products and services</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work

**Table 3: Problem associated in developing differences in hotels.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Misinterpretation</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ignorant and literacy</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cultural communication barriers</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Religion, religion, and norms</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Customs, norms, and tradition</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field study

**Table 4: Strategy that could be adopted in creating differences in hotels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Distinguish your products and services</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Value your customer and understand reason for repeat patronage</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identify various needs of guests</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Local content</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Green tools in cleaning</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey