

COVID-19 PANDEMIC; EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that is causing unprecedented impact globally on social and economic lives. Business organisations are badly hit by the effects, as most of the government policies at curbing of the diseases are not favourable to their operations. Due to the nature of client contact, the hospitality and tourism business is one of the most vulnerable industries. The study aims at examining the effect of COVID -19 and government policies in curbing the virus on hospitality and tourism businesses. It also discusses adaptive strategy put in place by the industry to survive during and aftermath of the pandemic period. This study adopts resilience theory as a framework for a proper understanding on how organisations cope in the face of crisis. The study focused on seven hospitality and tourism firms that were purposefully chosen. The findings revealed that government policies such as Public health guidelines (PHG), Stay at Home (SAH), Social Distance (SD) and Ban on Mass Social Gathering (BMSG) greatly impacted the industry negatively and rebuilding the resilience of the economy depends on Hospitality and business operators exploring new sources of revenue, government implementing strategic public health policies to contain the pandemic and creating enabling environment by increasing fiscal stimulus to boost the local economy

Keywords: COVID-19, Government policy, Hospitality and Tourism, Infectious disease, Resilience theory.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 epidemic has altered the workplace. It has also become one of the major test for organisations, business owners and employees working in organisations all over the world. It has affected global economy Eggers (2020) and the hospitality and the tourism industry is one of the most badly affected because of the policies put in place by governments around the world to curb the deadly pandemic (Nicole et al 2020). The highly infectious disease has brought about restrictions on the hospitality and tourism business affecting operations and service delivery in the industry. In China, Nicole et al, (2020) reported that hotel occupancy dropped by 90% while in U.S.A RevPar also dropped to 11.6%. According to the European parliament 2020, one billion euros in tourism revenues was lost as a result of the effect of the pandemic. Furthermore, Baker et al.

(2020), Makridis & Rothwell (2020) observed that restaurant and tourism businesses were negatively impacted by numerous limitations such as physical separation, social separation, stay-at-home directives, and the closure of non-essential businesses, among others. The hospitality sector is naturally a customer-facing industry, and has the tendency of high risk exposure to the disastrous effects of the COVID-19 epidemic and other infectious illnesses that came before it. Between February and April 2020, the entertainment and leisure industry in the United States fell by 56%, while jobs in the accommodation and food and beverage industries fell by 53%. (Cajner et al 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Council has predicted that 200 million jobs in the travel and tourism industry, mostly in the food service and hotel industries, might be lost globally (Mckensy & Company 2020). Many companies lay off their staff

because they could not pay salaries Hanson (2020) as many hotels, travels, leisure and entertainment business were closed down. Aviation industry was not spared as airplanes were grounded and staffs were also laid off (Gossling et al 2020).

In Nigeria, the impact also brought a lot of hard times on business operators and citizens. It has affected the socio economic life of the people due to the strict policies imposed by the government to curb the virus. In March 27th 2020, Federal Government of Nigeria enforced social distancing, ordered closure of schools and businesses in FCT, Lagos and Ogun state. Gradually the enforcement spread to other states as the pandemic cases rises. The stay at home, lock down policies and ban on interstate travels has devastating effects on small businesses. Buying and selling businesses were greatly affected and these are the core business in the local economy. The virus had a significant impact on Nigeria's hospitality and tourist industry, as hotels and tourism firms were forced to close, resulting in the dismissal of some employees and nonpayment of salary (Ayoade, 2020). The Nigerian stock exchange reported that 4 major listed hotels in Nigeria had significant drop in their revenue up to nearly 90% due to the lockdown and other government policies. Revenue of these hotels all together dropped to 1billion in the year 2020 compared to 10.2 billion in 2019 (Nairametrics, 2020) Bureau of Statistics also reported that food and beverage sector of the hospitality industry recorded a contraction of over 40% in their GDP. Hospitality and tourism business operators, therefore started seeking cost saving strategy as money is not coming in due to reduction in occupancy rates and low patronage.

Though some countries, including Nigeria has reopened for economic activities partially or fully, while majority are still struggling to get back to business, another surge of the virus has rare it head causing another havoc and confusion as well as introduction of additional policies. It is now cleared that COVID-19 has come to stay just like HIV, AIDS, Yellow

fever, tuberculosis and so on. . Before the incident of COVID -19, the Nigeria economy is already facing some crisis, according to Onyekwere and Ekerucha (2020), the Nigerian GDP was estimated at 2.5% in 2020. This study therefore, examines the impact of COVID-19 and government policies in curbing the pandemic on hospitality and tourism industry. However, this study will focus on government public health policy on COVID-19 by purposely sampling seven (7) selected hospitality and tourism businesses. The study will also discuss adaptive strategy adopted that can sustain the hospitality and tourism business during and aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current Covid-19 outbreak has ushered in a new reality for the hospitality industry. It is not always business as usual. Hospitality business operators are facing serious restrictions in their operations as governments all over the world are putting in place policies to curb the rampaging pandemic. The emphasis is now on staff and customer health and safety. Government policies on COVID-19 is not favourable to hospitality business due to the customer contact service nature. Therefore, there is need for hospitality business operators to look for adaptive strategies to remain in business. This study intends to dwell on the effect of COVID- 19 pandemic and government policies , (with emphasis on the public health policy) on hospitality businesses, the resiliency and adaptive strategies put in place to survive during the pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the relationship between the hotel industry and infectious disease.
2. To examine the effect of government policies on COVID-19 on hospitality and tourism business.
3. To find out the strategic resilient approach adopted by hospitality and tourism business in order to remain in business,

- To suggest features that will help the industry to survive during and aftermath of the pandemic

RESEARCH QUESTION

- Do government policies in curbing COVID-19 pandemic have any impact on Hospitality and Tourism business?
- What are the government policies that greatly impacted the hospitality and tourism industry
- What are the strategic resilient approaches adopted by the hospitality and tourism business operators in the face of the pandemic to remain in business?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀: Government policies on COVID-19 has significant impact on hospitality and tourism industry

H₁: Government policies on COVID-19 has no significant impact on hospitality and tourism industry

LITERATURE REVIEW

The hospitality industry and infectious diseases

Several infectious illnesses have posed problems for the hotel business in the past. COVID-19 is not the first and may not be the last of its kind. Evidence has shown that varieties of infectious diseases and other disasters had impacted the hospitality & tourism industry. (Bloom & Caderette 2019, Hall 2019). According to Bloom and Caderette 2019, when a country is affected by contagious diseases the effect of the diseases, this should be measured by ease of spreading, its mortality rate, the age group that is likely to be greatly affected, ease of transmission and most especially the publicity given to it by the media and how it is been viewed by the traveling public in relations to their travel plans decisions, for example, in the case of COVID -19, there were lot of conspiracy theory, fears was instill in people by different press release and social media news. However, Tatem et al, (2006), explained that

development in the transportation system contributed immensely to easy transmission of the disease from one place to another. This was supported by Hall (2010) that highly mobile nature of the tourism and travel industry can lead to more crises in future. Hence, the need to discuss Infectious illnesses that have previously impacted the hospitality and tourism industry. These are highlighted in Table 1 below :

| Type of disease or infection | Origin | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome) 2003 | From china and migrated to 29 countries around the world. About 800 death was recorded. | About 12,000,Hotel and tourist business staffs were lay off (CDC,2012; WHO,2006). |
| HINI(Swine Flu) 2009 | Mexico to USA before migrating. A total of 575 people were reported dead | Mexico lost around 665million dollars in tourism receipts. USA, \$250 million, Canada, \$31 Million and UK, \$20Million respectively. (CDC, 2012; Rassy and Smith, 2012). |
| EBOLA VIRUS 2013 | Guinea, West Africa. 12,000 deaths was recorded | 1.6 million dollar was lost by hospitality and tourism business. South Africa and Kenya Tourism receipts dropped drastically despite being Africa's most preferred tourists destinations. (World Bank; CDC,2012). |
| MERS (Middle East | Middle East and was | 2.6 billion dollars was lost |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Respiratory Syndrome) 2015 | brought to South Korea by a Middle Eastern traveller. 2,500 cases globally. 900 deaths were recorded | by South Korea in tourism industry. (CDC,2012). |
|----------------------------|--|---|

COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is the current pandemic that is destroying the globe and changing the workplace. A new phenomenon most research work on it are still conceptual or more of critical commentaries (Baum and Hai 2020; Alonso et al 2020). A brief overview of the virus will be discussed in this study due to word limitation. Corona Virus 2019. Originated from Wuhan China, started as a respiratory disease or infection. International travel had a significant role in its rapid proliferation over the world. Initially, the United States was in the lead due to a huge number of afflicted citizens. In May of 2020, approximately 21 million cases were reported worldwide, with the United States accounting for around 5.5 million of those, with over 771 deaths (WHO 2020). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2020a), around 5.5 million employees were laid off in the leisure and tourist industry. As at the writing of this study, India is going through series of attack by the virus as new variant has emerged. According to BBC 2021, 115million cases has been recorded with 2.5 million deaths worldwide. Data for COVID-19 cases were daily released and monitor by government for decision making. It is evident that COVID-19 is the most devastating of all the infectious diseases that has impacted and disrupted the hospitality and travel industry including the world economy due to its global infection (Gossling et al 2020). They explained that SARS, MERS has no serious effect on hospitality and tourism development due to the resilient nature of the industry. This may be because pandemics are different from one another (Zeng et al 2005).

In Nigeria, initially COVID-19 was view as a myth, it was also politicized as our government were playing with COVID-19 data reported daily. This led to lackadaisical attitudes of the populace as they do not follow strictly the public health guidelines and government policies on the virus. Many people refuse to wear mask, stay at home and social distance was not taken serious until the second wave of infection. However, the resultant effect on the economy jolted back all and sundries to the reality.

The federal government of Nigeria after imposing lockdown in March 2020, introduced strategic intervention policies. According to Dixit et al (2020) and Frempong-Kore & Atieku (2020), these policies include, public health, social and economic policies, these are aimed at cushioning the effect of COVID-19 on the already worsen economy.

Policies are rules or guides used as basis for making decision which is expected to give a positive outcome and be beneficial to all. Government policies therefore are set of rules that express goals, decisions and actions adopted by government for positive social, economic and political outcome, with the hope that it will address the challenges facing the government and her citizenry most especially during emergency or crisis. However, Government policies on COVID-19 though very necessary in the face of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic, has caused a lot of social and economic problems to the already weaken Nigeria economy. The effect on the hospitality is even more severe as most of the policies restricts and affect the operations of the hospitality industry. As a result, the purpose of this research is to look at the impact of government policies on the hospitality and tourism industries.

The policies adopted by the FGN to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on the economy are highlighted below.

Public Health Policies

1 Presidential Task Force for COVID-19

- 2 Transportation & Logistics: International & Domestic travel ban
- 3 Ban on mass social gathering & religious activities for over 50 people
- 4 Closure of schools
- 5 Lockdown order
- 6 Nationwide overnight curfew
- 7 Mask mandate in public

Socio-economic Policies

1 Tax Measures: Direct & Indirect: e.g. payment deferrals (extension of due dates for reporting VAT and WHT from the 21st to the last business day of the month, e-filing of taxes for businesses, exemption of medical services from VAT and import duties), rate reductions/tax reliefs for COVID-19 donors (Note: promised but not yet implemented as at time of study.)

2 Economic Stimulus Measures: e.g. loans, moratorium on debt repayment. Monetary Policy: Creation of N50 billion credit facilities for affected households & SMEs, reduction of interest rates on intervention loans from 9% to 5%, financial facilities to assist a few local pharmaceutical companies in obtaining raw materials and equipment in order to increase local medication manufacture. Fiscal Policy: The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has pledged to inject NGN 1.1 trillion (USD 3 billion) into crucial sectors of the economy after the fall of the crude oil benchmark from USD 57 to USD 30.

3 Customs Measures: restriction on exportation of masks, possible reduction of customs duty and customs audit are being considered

4 Food Assistance: free food rations to the needy via FMHADMSD

5 New electricity tariffs will not be implemented until the first quarter of 2021.

6 Visitors affected by the travel restriction and the shutdown of international airports are eligible for a payment waiver from the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS).

7 With effect from April 1, 2020, the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) would

be slashed from N143.50 to N123.50 per liter. This has since been reversed to the old price

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Resilience theory

In an attempt to understand how hospitality business cope during crisis. The notion of resilience will be used in this study because it provides a deeper knowledge of how organizations can deal with emergencies and occurrences such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the present and future. The theory emphasizes on the capacity of organisation to adapt or cope during difficult times, occurrences or emergencies that may disrupt their existence as an organization. Norris et al. (2006) define it as a process that connects pre-determined adaptive skills to a positive trajectory of identifying and adjusting following a disruption. According to Brown et al. (2017), it is a dynamic process. While Herbane, (2019), describe it as an indication of an organization preparedness and capability to deal with emergencies or crisis. However, he explained that it does not guarantee successful recovery for all organisations, however, some organization may succeed in overcoming without any difficulty. For example, some small scale hospitality business has the capability of coping with crisis without preparedness due to their nature (Herbane, 2019).

Resilience in Hospitality and Tourism industry.

Evidence have shown that there has been discussion on resilience in the event of disasters impacting the hospital and tourism businesses (Brown et al 2017). There are several sorts of resilience, according to them. Community, economic, organizational and systems, all having important implications on the hospitality business. They further explained that it is important to prioritize disaster resilience in hospitality business most especially among hotels, as adaptive capacity, flexibility, organization culture, promoting

innovations and self-efficiency are vital factors in improvement of organizational resilience.

Resilience theory has also been applied in the event of extreme weather conditions among hotels by (Lamanna et al 2021). Several other disasters in the USA (Bousso et al 2011: Brown et al 2018) They concluded that local infrastructure, human and social capital were determinant variable helping the hospitality industry build resilience. In order to adjust to evolving customer needs, resilience theory has been used. Hellak et al (2018), proposed that where organizational resilience is highly related to creative self-efficiency and innovation will have impacts on organizations performance.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design, often known as statistical research, was used in this study. It contains information and characteristics about the population or phenomena under investigation. It was chosen because its describe relationship between variables and does not include any treatment or control group. Data were obtained from secondary

sources: journals, text books and online resources. The nature of the study dictates the use of survey approach for collecting relevant information; therefore questionnaires were mainly used as research instrument to adequately obtain required information from respondents. A structured and unstructured pattern were adopted to make the question more flexible. Some organisations were purposively chosen for the study because their opinion will be very relevant to the study and will provide rich data (Patton, 2015). Seven (7) different hospitality and tourism businesses were chosen. They include a commercial hotel, a fine dining restaurant, a fast food, event hall, theme park, night club and cinemas all located in Lagos. Data were collected on face to face method from four participants each from the various organisations. Total number of respondents is therefore twenty eight (28). Likert scale of Strongly agreed (SD), Agreed.(A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly disagreed (SD) were adopted with 4, 3, 2,1 rating respectively The statistical analysis used is Chi-square test.

Table 2 showing summary of characteristics of participants

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Type of establishment | Commercial hotel | Fine dining restaurant | Fast food | Event centres | cinemas | Theme park | Night club |
| Sample size | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Number interviewed | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Gender | | | | | | | |
| Male | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Female | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Age of organization | 12 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 13 | 15 |
| Average year of staff working experience in organization | 7 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| Position in organization | | | | | | | |
| Owner/CEO | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Manager | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Supervisor | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Junior staff | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The findings from the research was summarised in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 below

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation responses on research question one: What are the government policies that impacted your business the most?

| S/N | ITEM | MEAN | SD | REMARKS |
|-----|--|------|-------|---------|
| 1 | Stay at home lockdown | 3.35 | 0.381 | Agreed |
| 2 | Ban on Mass gathering/ social distance | 3.11 | 0.353 | Agreed |
| 3 | Public health guidelines | 3.58 | 0.407 | Agreed |

Table 3 above, shows that all respondents agreed that government policies on Covid-19 has great impact on their businesses. Policies such as Stay at home (SAH), Ban on mass gathering (BMG) and Social distance (SD) in addition to public health guideline sthis was revealed with the following mean and standard deviation of 3.35 and 0.381. 3-11 and 0.353 and 3.84 and 0.407respectively

Table 4: Research question two. What are the effects of government policies on Covid-19 your business?

| S/N | Items | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------|-------|---------|
| 1 | Low patronage | 3.62 | 0.453 | Agreed |
| 2 | Low Revenue | 3.16 | 0.395 | Agreed |
| 3 | Inability to run at full capacity | 3.39 | 0.424 | Agreed |
| 4 | Inability to pay staff | 3.25 | 0.406 | Agreed |
| 5 | Inability to service loan | 3.08 | 0.385 | Agreed |
| 6 | Working days disrupted | 3.64 | 0.455 | Agreed |
| 7 | Service mode | 3.60 | 0.450 | Agreed |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|--|--|--|
| | disrupted | | | |
|--|-----------|--|--|--|

The result from table above disclosed that all various business organisations agreed that all the above highlighted government policies on Covid-19 affected their business. This was express with mean and standard deviation : 3.62 and 0.453, 3.16 and 0.395, 3.39 and 0.424, 3.25 and 0.406, 3.08 and 0.385,3.64 and 0.455 and 3.60 and 0.450 respectively.

Table 5: Research Question three. What are the adaptive strategies taken to remain in business.

| S/N | Items | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------|-------|---------|
| 1 | Down sizing | 3.47 | 0.394 | AGREED |
| 2 | Reduction in overhead costs | 3.18 | 0.361 | |
| 3 | Renegotiation of loans/tax | 3.02 | 0.343 | |
| 4 | Changing business operations | 3.24 | 0.368 | |
| 5 | Sourcing for more local suppliers | 2.99 | 0.340 | |
| 6 | Diversifying. | 3.31 | 0.376 | |

Table 5 above disclosed that all the hospitality and tourism business agreed that the highlighted strategies in table 5 above were adopted by them to remain in business. This was with mean and standard deviation as follows: 3.47 and 0.394, 3.18 and 0.361, 3.02 and 0.343, 3.24 and 0.368, 2.99 and 0.340 and 3.31 and 0.376 respectively

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Statement of Hypothesis

H_1 : Government policies on Covid-19 pandemic has significant effect on hospitality and industry

H_0 : Government policies on Covid-19 pandemic has no significant effect on Hospitality and Tourism industry.

Table 6: Test of hypothesis

| Responses | (O) | (E) | (O - E) ² | (O - E) ² /E |
|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------|-------------------------|
|-----------|-----|-----|----------------------|-------------------------|

| | | | | |
|--------------------|----|---|----|-------|
| Strongly Agreed | 15 | 7 | 64 | 9.14 |
| Agreed | 9 | 7 | 4 | 0.57 |
| Disagreed | 3 | 7 | 16 | 2.29 |
| Strongly Disagreed | 1 | 7 | 36 | 5.14 |
| Total | 28 | | | 17.14 |

The critical value at 5% level of significant $\alpha = 3.84$. Since 17.1 is greater than 3.84 i.e. (chi square χ^2 is greater than α then the hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. i.e. Government policies on Covid-19 has significant effect on hospitality and tourism industry).

DISCUSSION

From the table 2 above, majority of the organisations has been operating between 8 to 15yrs, implying that they have experience one form of pandemic. In addition, all respondents selected belong to the management and supervisory cadre because only senior staff are allowed to work. Majority has between 6 and 7years working experience in their various establishments, and so is in position to know the situation and give good response to the subject matter. It was also revealed in Table 4 that all the hospitality and tourism business selected for this study agreed that government policies: Stay at home, Ban on mass social gathering, social distance and public health guidelines greatly impacted their business. They all also agreed that it resulted in low patronage, low revenue, inability to pay or service loans, inability to pay staffs, disruption in service, disruption in supply chain, working days/hours and service mode disruptions; this was shown in Table 5. This made the industry more vulnerable and not good for business because the industry is contact service in nature (Huang et al 2020). However, during face to face interview, the researchers discovered that most of the hospitality outfits (especially luxury and star rated hotels), are not greatly impacted as other organisation by the government policies on Public Health Mandates such as provisions of masks, gloves, sanitizers, hand washing facilities, and other

protective apparels to employees and customers. They view it as part of service to their numerous customers, as safety and comfort of guests is a priority of hospitality organisations. This corroborated by (Pizam, 2010; Peter et al 2014). However, night club, cinemas, event centers and theme parks complained. They view it as additional cost to their operation expenses.

In the aspect of government socio-economic policies such as tax measures, economic stimulus measures, custom measures among others; it was revealed that most of these are mere political statement. This is supported by Abraham Pizam, (2021) that some countries government politicized the issue of Covid-19. For example, none of the selected participants claimed that they are yet to receive any economic stimulus while some also explained that the palliatives were not easily accessible, some requires documentation and processes that are frustrating. Some of the policies such as reduction in fuel price, waivers in electricity bills has been reverted while some organisations are yet to get out of the effect of the pandemic. Selected participants for the study had to make changes and adjustments in their operations and prioritize some activities over others in order to remain in business. While many are still struggling as at the time of writing this paper, many anticipating another lockdown due to Delta variant, as explained by Pizam, A (2021), that recovery of hospitality and tourism business from the pandemic may not be soon because of the nature of the virus.

CONCLUSION

AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study focuses on COVID's effects on the hotel and tourism industries. The perceptions of hospitality and tourist industry operators on the virus's impacts and implications on their various businesses, as well as the adaptive approach employed, were also investigated. This study concludes that government policy has devastating effect on the industry due to their customer contact service nature. It has

ushered in a new era of business. However, the resilient nature of the industry in the area of local infrastructure, self-efficiency, human and social capital will assist the industry to build resilience against COVID-19. Drawing from the recommendation of Segitoglu and Ivanov (2020), this study therefore recommends that. The organization should explore new sources of revenues, drastically reduce overheads, renegotiate inefficient pricing orders and bank loans, explore capital raising efforts and continuously push for internal loans from CBN for financial stability. There is also a need for the government to put in place a strategic strategy to control the epidemic, as well as provide easy-to-access economic support to aid in the long-term recovery of the hotel and tourism industries.

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