

ANCHOR UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (AUJHMSS)



**ANCHOR
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Volume 5 2024

ISSN: 2992-3263 (Print)
ISSN: 2992-3271 (Online)

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES,
MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES**

**JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, MANAGEMENT
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

ISSN: 2992-3263 (Print)
ISSN: 2992-3271 (Online)

Vol. 5.

December 2024

Published by:



**Faculty of Humanities & Faculty of Social and Management Sciences,
Anchor University Ayobo, Lagos.**

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Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences

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Anchor University Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (AUJHMSS) is a peer reviewed biannual, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary research journal. AUJHMSS accepts original research and review articles in the disciplines of humanities studies, social sciences, management sciences, and allied fields. The objective of the Journal is to disseminate knowledge towards positive social changes and enhance professionalism in all relevant fields.

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The Role of Disease Outbreak on The Operations of the Hospitality Industry in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

Disease outbreak refer to occurrence where there is a sudden increase in the number of cases of a particular disease within a specific area, population or community over a period of time. Disease outbreaks have the capacity and tendency to paralyze business activities due to restriction in movement and safety consciousness on the part of the affected population. It is expedient to understand the effect of disease outbreak on the service sector like hospitality industry. This study adopted a descriptive research design and used quantitative data collection methods through which 64 respondents who are staff and management of Noktel Resort Hotel, were purposively sampled. Finding revealed that the hotel experienced great patronage across all service points before the Covid-19 pandemic. However, when Covid-19 struck, the hotel employed the strategy of offering free delivery of food and beverages to customers, and free pick up of guests that booked online within Ilorin Metropolis to improve their sales as patronage was affected. The hotel also engaged social distancing for staff and guest, offered customized free nose mask and located wash hand basin in strategic places to reduce the spread of the disease. The Hotel used the opportunity of the downtime in sales to restructure and repair some of its facilities, train employees and install safety equipment within the establishment. The study concluded that the effects of the pandemic on the hospitality industry can be worked on for a better thriving of the hospitality industry, especially through collaboration among hospitality business owners. Part of the recommendations of this study is that the hospitality industry should develop detailed crisis management plans that outline specific strategies and protocols for responding to disease outbreaks and other disruptive events, and also explore other aspects of the industry like organizing value added service capable of ensuring diversification.

Keywords: Disease Outbreak, Pandemic, Hospitality, Covid-19, and Crisis Management

Introduction

The hospitality industry includes the hotel and motel, or lodging, trade. As defined by the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education, it also includes food services, recreation services, and tourism. The hospitality industry provides accommodations, meals, and personal services for both the traveling public and permanent residents (American Hotel and Lodging Association, 2020). A way to better understand hospitality is by looking at The Big Four: Food and beverage, travel and tourism, lodging, and recreation. The food and beverage category includes restaurants, bars, and lounges. Travel and tourism covers airlines and travel agencies. Recreation usually means activities such as golfing, fishing, and tennis. All of these in hospitality industry are connected by the drive to provide an enjoyable experience for all who travel to participate (Litvin, 2020).

The study of disease outbreaks, often referred to as epidemiology, is a crucial field in public health that fo-

cuses on understanding the distribution, patterns, and determinants of health and diseases in populations. The primary goal of epidemiology is to control and prevent health problems by identifying risk factors, implementing interventions, and guiding public health policy. It becomes essential to understand how disease outbreak affect hospitality industry due to its labour intensiveness and need for customer patronage. Ancient societies observed disease patterns and made rudimentary attempts at public health measures. For instance, quarantine measures were used during outbreaks of bubonic plague in medieval Europe. In ancient Greece, Hippocrates proposed that environmental and host factors such as lifestyle and diet could influence the occurrence of diseases. Often called the father of modern epidemiology, Snow's work in 1854 during a cholera outbreak in London demonstrated the importance of mapping disease cases and identifying sources of infection, such as contaminated water. In the 1840s, Semmelweis showed that handwashing with chlorinated lime solutions could drastically reduce puerperal fever cases in obstetric clinics (Elflein, 2020).

However, advances in technology, such as genomic sequencing, geographic information systems (GIS), and data analytics, have enhanced the ability to track and understand disease outbreaks. Social media and mobile technology are increasingly used for real-time data collection and public health communication. Notable disease outbreaks include Influenza Pandemics which first broke out in 1918 as Spanish flu pandemic and resulted in significant advancements in understanding influenza transmission, and led to the establishment of international influenza surveillance. Recent pandemics, such as H1N1 in 2009 and COVID-19 in 2019, have further underscored the importance of global preparedness and response coordination, especially among hospitality business operators. Also, since the 1980s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has driven significant research into viral transmission, antiretroviral therapies, and public health interventions aimed at reducing transmission and improving quality of life for those affected (Kalu, 2020).

Furthermore, another popular disease outbreak was Ebola, which recently occurred between 2014-2016. Ebola outbreak in West Africa highlighted the challenges of managing infectious diseases in resource-limited settings and emphasized the need for rapid response and international support. Similarly, the 2015-2016 Zika virus outbreak brought attention to the impact of vector-borne diseases and the need for integrated vector management and maternal health interventions. Finally, and most recently is COVID-19 Pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, emerged in late 2019 and rapidly spread globally, leading to unprecedented public health challenges. Hospitality businesses and operations were not left behind in the negative impact of covid-19. According to Ogundeji (2022), The pandemic resulted in millions of deaths worldwide and has highlighted the critical importance of rapid diagnostics, vaccine development, public health infrastructure, and global cooperation. It has also brought attention to issues of health disparities, the need for resilient healthcare systems, and the impact of misinformation on public health efforts(Bhatia and Khetrpal, 2020).

These notable disease outbreaks have significantly influenced the field of epidemiology and public health, driving innovations and improvements in how we prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases. Hence, the hospitality industry has overtime imbibed the culture of maintain strong health policy when it comes to staff recruitment and accommodation of guests. Disease outbreak has the capacity to impact both the employees, management and customers that patronise the hospitality business. The study of disease outbreaks is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field that continues to evolve, driven by advancements in science, technology, and public health practices. The hospitality sector was badly hit by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The restrictions of the movement of people both internationally and locally had a devastating impact on the

sector. Most companies that operate in the hospitality sector struggled in 2020 while countries that depend on the tourism and travel sector such as Kenya, Greece, Iceland, etc, also struggled as they recorded a decline in their revenues (Ovat, 2020).

The hospitality sector in Nigeria was not left out of the global crisis. The lockdown and social distancing measures pursued by the Federal and various state governments affected businesses involved in the hospitality ecosystem. Hotels recorded declines in their occupancy rates, profits, and patronage in most of their business segments while tourist companies recorded low tourist arrivals both domestically and internationally. All the hotels listed on the Nigeria Stock Exchange (NSE) recorded losses in 2020. Ikeja hotels recorded a loss of N1.75bn in 2020 while Capital Hotels Plc and Transcorp Hotels Plc recorded losses of N266m and N8.93bn, respectively. Some analysts believe that the fortunes of these companies would improve in 2021 on the back of a full re-opening of the economy, widespread COVID-19 vaccination, and an increase in travel (Simon, 2023).

This meant a major shift from the old to the new normal way of operations, hospitality industry has undergone a significant shift since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, the industry was largely focused on traditional methods of operation, but since the pandemic, there has been a shift towards new and innovative ways of operating. Some of the changes that have been made include a greater emphasis on hygiene and sanitation, a focus on contactless service, and the use of technology to improve efficiency. These changes have been made in order to ensure the safety of both guests and employees. This study adopted Covid-19 as reference point because of its perceived significant impact on the hospitality industry in Ilorin metropolis using Noktel Resort Hotel as a case study to investigate the impact of disease outbreak on hospitality business operation.

The hospitality industry is known to be an industry that has never been shut down. It is an industry that operates round the clock (24hours). Never in history has this industry been affected, especially in the accommodation, food and beverage department, without a major natural or human orchestrated disaster. In the year 2019, precisely in the month of December, a major pandemic struck the whole globe, and led to an unprecedented reorganization of many businesses and services, service industry was greatly affected, and hospitality businesses were not exempted, this was caused by the Covid-19 and its rules on social distance and no sit-in restaurants. This greatly affected the operations and optimal maximization of profit in hospitality industry, just like every other disease outbreak in the past such Ebola and Influenza. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry has been profound, leading to job losses, operational restrictions, and financial challenges globally. Research studies have focused on understanding these implications, resilience strategies, and recovery plans within the sector. Efforts are being made to formulate recovery strategies post-pandemic, emphasizing innovation, resilience building, and technology adoption. However, there is lack of sufficient information about the effect of the pandemic on certain areas of hospitality operation, especially in the aspect of patronage and consequently revenue generation by the hospitality establishments.

Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the effects of Covid-19 Pandemic during and after the lockdown on the operations of the hospitality industries, with reference to Noktel Resort Hotel in Ilorin metropolis. The research highlights the importance of consumer behavior analysis, job resilience, and crisis management in navigating through these challenging times.

The sole aim of this study is to examine the effects of disease outbreak on the operations of the hospitality industry in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria, with special focus on level of patronage and revenue generation during the pandemic, using Noktel Resort Hotel as a case study. The following objectives are designed to guide the aim

of this of this study: to determine the level of patronage experienced by Noktel Resort Hotel before Covid-19 pandemic; to ascertain the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on the operation of Noktel Resort Hotel; to investigate the strategies employed by the hotel in ensuring customer patronage during pandemic; and the measures designed against future pandemic.

Literature Review

A disease outbreak is the occurrence of disease cases in excess of normal expectancy. The number of cases varies according to the disease-causing agent, and the size and type of previous and existing exposure to the agent. Disease outbreaks are usually caused by an infection, transmitted through person-to-person contact, animal-to animal contact, or from the environment or other media. Outbreaks may also occur following exposure to chemicals or to radioactive materials. For example, Minamata disease is caused by exposure to mercury. Occasionally, the cause of an outbreak is unknown, even after thorough investigation (World Health Organisation, 2023).

Communicable Disease Outbreaks

Environmental factors can influence the spread of communicable disease, for instance water, sanitation, food and air quality are vital elements in the transmission of communicable diseases and in the spread of diseases prone to cause epidemics. The most important of these are: water supply, sanitation facilities, food, and climate. A lack of safe water, inadequate excreta disposal facilities, poor hygiene, poor living conditions and unsafe food can all cause diarrhea diseases. These diseases are a major cause of suffering and death in an emergency situation. Climate can affect disease transmission in a variety of ways. The distribution and population size of disease vectors can be heavily affected by local climate. Flooding after heavy rains can result in sewage overflow and widespread water contamination. In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that pathogens can be spread from one region to another along air streams or by wind. WHO's response to communicable disease outbreaks is led by the Epidemic and Pandemic Alert and Response Department (WHO, 2023; Centre for Disease Control and Prevention 2024).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the world's economy was shut down almost overnight (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020). The pandemic has confronted the hospitality industry with an unprecedented challenge. Strategies to flatten the COVID-19 curve such as community lockdowns, social distancing, stay-at-home orders, travel and mobility restrictions have resulted in temporary closure of many hospitality businesses and significantly decreased the demand for businesses that were allowed to continue to operate (Bartik et al., 2020). Almost all restaurants were asked to limit their operations to only take-outs. Restrictions placed on travel and stay-at-home orders issued by the authorities led to sharp decline in hotel occupancies and revenues. However, the reopening process has slowly begun and authorities have started to ease restrictions, for example, allow dine-in restaurants to reopen at a reduced capacity with strict social distancing guidelines, and gradually reduce restrictions on domestic and international travel (UNWTO, 2020).

The virus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, who responded to the outbreak by implementing a nationwide lockdown. Efforts to contain the virus failed, and it began to spread worldwide. In response to the spread of the virus, the World Health Organization declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and later a pandemic on 11 March 2020. As of 11 July 2021, more than 186 million cases have been confirmed, and more than 4.02 million confirmed deaths attributed to COVID-19, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in history. Several of the variants of the virus have re-

sulted in rising cases and deaths in various countries (WHO, 2020). Mckean (2024) added that variants such as EG.5 (Eris) and BA.2.86 (Pirola) circulated widely with higher transmissibility causing spike in the infection.

SARS-CoV-2 was identified in early January and its genetic sequence shared publicly on 11-12 January. The full genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 from the early human cases and the sequences of many other viruses isolated from human cases from China and all over the world since then show that SARS-CoV-2 has an ecological origin in bat populations. All available evidence to date suggests that the virus has a natural animal origin and is not a manipulated or constructed virus. Many researchers have been able to look at the genomic features of SARS-CoV-2 and have found that evidence does not support that SARS-CoV-2 is a laboratory construct. If it were a constructed virus, its genomic sequence would show a mix of known elements. This is not the case. SARS-CoV-2 was identified in early January and its genetic sequence shared publicly on 11-12 January. The full genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 from the early human cases and the sequences of many other viruses isolated from human cases from China and all over the world since then show that SARS-CoV-2 has an ecological origin in bat populations. All available evidence to date suggests that the virus has a natural animal origin and is not a manipulated or constructed virus. Many researchers have been able to look at the genomic features of SARS-CoV-2 and have found that evidence does not support that SARS-CoV-2 is a laboratory construct. If it were a constructed virus, its genomic sequence would show a mix of known elements (Andersen, 2020).

The pandemic has resulted in severe global, social and economic disruption, including the largest global recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It has led to widespread supply shortages exacerbated by panic buying, agricultural disruption, and food shortages. However, it has also caused temporary decreases in emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases. Numerous educational institutions and public areas have been partially or fully closed, and many events have been cancelled or postponed. Misinformation has circulated through social media and mass media, and political tensions have been exacerbated. The pandemic has raised issues of racial and geographic discrimination, health equity, wealth inequity and the balance between public health imperatives and individual rights (Marchildon, 2020).

Covid-19 in Nigeria

The first confirmed case in Nigeria was announced on the 27th February, 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive, for the Virus. On the 9th of March 2020, a second case was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had a contact with the Italian. (NigeriaCentre for Disease Control, 2020). On the 20th of April, Nigeria extended the closure of Airports, while in the same month, the Federal Government announced an indefinite Nationwide curfew from 8am- 6pm, while also placing embargo on non-essential interstate passenger travel, allowing partial and inter-state movement of goods and services, announcing the mandatory use of Facemask or coverings in public places and extending the ban on social and religious gatherings. (NCDC, 2020).

Gradually from October 2020, the lockdown was eased by each state and normalcy returned to the businesses, restaurants, Hotels, relaxation centers etc. But still, the economy and hospitality industry is still recovering from the effect of Covid-19 pandemic. This recovery will also take a while, because of the new way of doing things. Recently another pandemic is being identified known as Covid-19 Delta variant, which is perceived to be deadly than Covid-19.

This study therefore considers the implication of disease outbreaks on hospitality business operations through

the advent of Covid-19 pandemic. Ebola, also being a very deadly disease had a very significant impact on the hospitality industry. However, in tandem with the earlier assertion, Covid-19 forms the basis of concern for this study because it is the most recent major disease outbreak. Covid-19 Pandemic has seemingly come and gone. This can be seen in the relaxation or even non observance of medical protocols and social distancing enforced during the pandemic. Although, its impact on the hospitality industry cannot be overemphasized (McKean (2024).

The Systemic Nature of the Disruptions and Problems Caused by Disease Outbreak

Patronage in the hospitality and tourism sector is fast rising and things are seemingly falling back in place. However, the mode of service delivery in the hospitality and tourism industry has been drastically and permanently altered during and after the last pandemic. This disruption has unearthed novel problems and also novel vistas of growth in the sector. People tends to prefer personalized services, higher standard of hygiene, demand remote exclusive services, prefer minimal social contact in hotel, demands more carefully crafted menus. These demands and many more have necessitated a paradigm shift in the hospitality and tourism industry that is driven by emerging trends in technology. This is the conceptual connection between the problem and disruption caused by the pandemic and engagement of emerging technological trends to proffer sustainable solution in the hospitality and tourism industry and how it affects their patronage and revenue generation (Chang, 2021).

Apparently, Covid-19 pandemic also provided and still provides huge opportunities for growth and expansion in the hotel and tourism industry. These opportunities can only be harnessed and utilized by business that have made the quantum leap and gained the paradigm shift provided by better understanding of how to cope with disease outbreak using technology and implementing policies that can help to reposition the hospitality and tourism industry, especially in Ilorin to harness the opportunity provided by the post Covid-19 hospitality and tourism industry. By establishing the effect and consequences of Covid-19 pandemic on Ilorin hospitality industry, this study offers insight for the government of Nigeria and private sectors to put in place innovative business solutions that deals with lingering effect of disease outbreaks and also proffer sustainable solution to deals with similar situation in the future. At the peak of the pandemic, human interactions were severely restricted by nationwide lockdown, socio distancing became the new mode of human interaction as the death toll kept rising and these greatly affected the hospitality industry (Kaushal& Srivastava, 2020).

Strain on the Operations and Revenue Generation of the Hospitality Industry

The restrictions enacted and enforced by the government of Nigeria to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, especially, the closure of the country's land borders, air-space and sea borders put a strain on the inbound tourists and business travelers who come from outside the country; thus, the border closures and restrictions on public gatherings, deprived hospitality industry such as hotels, restaurants, and aviation catering of their major patrons thus, affecting their revenue generation. For instance, hotel revenue before emergence of Covid-19 in Nigeria expanded at 22.6% compound annual rate of \$US1.1 billion in 2018 (Coopers, 2018). The report further opined that Nigeria's hotel revenue was expected to grow by 507 million dollars by 2020. However, reports from four of the major listed hotels on the Nigerian Stock Exchange, shows a revenue decline of nearly 90%, due to a fall out of the COVID-19 induced lockdowns (Nairametrics, 2020).

Steep Decline in Hotel Occupancy

It is pertinent to report that occupancy rate of all hotels in Nigeria are decreasing as well as wearing a desert-

ed look due to Coronavirus outbreak. The PreCovid-19 statistics on hotel occupancies in Nigeria shows that Nigeria's hotel industry accounted for 49.8%, 44.7%, 43.6%, 42.4%, and 42.6% occupancies in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively.(Coopers, 2018). This however implies that demand for hotel accommodation for instance is on the average. However, recent statistics shows that "the slow pick up of international travels, restriction on large gatherings, the switch to virtual meetings, and fear of the virus, has further reduced demand for hotels in Nigeria thus, steeping occupancy levels to its lowest –less than 5%" (Arianina& Morris, 2020). The implications of this are that Nigeria hospitality industry is seriously losing demands of her major products hence, the physical capacity of hotel facilities in Nigeria are underutilized.

Job Losses

It has been reported that hospitality industry in Nigeria is highly labour intensive despite recent trend of technology integration. However, recent realities in the Nigeria's hospitality industry show low patronage of restaurant businesses, major crashes in aviation catering services, closed hotels, and clubs including, event centers due to emergence and resurgence of Covid-19 pandemic. These have resulted in huge losses and large-scale unemployment (International Labour Organization, 2020). The dire state of financial capabilities of major hotels listed on the Nigerian stock exchange for instance has forced them to consider massive job cuts, and cost reduction measures in a bid to survive. At the inception of the pandemic, some major hotels maintained a 100% salary payment to over 900 employees in March and April, 2020. As at the end of November, 2020, their workforce headcount had reduced by more than 60%.

Mass Sales of Hospitality Business Facilities

One observed concern occasion by the emergence and resurgence of Covid-19 on the Nigeria's hospitality industry is uncontrollable rate of putting up hospitality business premises and facilities for sales in recent time due to bankruptcy (Simon, 2023). The crushing impact of Coronavirus on the travel industry has a devastating effect on hotels in Nigeria.

In the same vein, thousands of small hotels, resorts, motel, travel agencies and other travel related organization have to close their service due to this pandemic. Due to this, Nigeria hotel owners, and restaurant entrepreneurs practically finds it extremely difficult to run and sustain their businesses thus, exerting intense pressure on them to putting up sales advertisement of their properties on the country social media, and television stations seeking for interested buyers. This situation is worsened by poor government support and weak business recovery policy for hospitality business owners (AHLA, 2020).

Food and Beverage Sector

The food sector, including food distribution and retailing, has been put under strain as a result of people panic-buying and stockpiling food. This led to increased concerns about shortages of food products such as long-life milk, pasta, rice and tinned vegetables. Panic-buying has resulted in an increase of £1bn worth of food in UK homes. This high demand on food products has also affected online food delivery. Companies are struggling with excessive bookings, with deliveries arriving late or not at all. Moreover, food banks have also been affected by panic-buying and food stockpiling as donations have reduced. Concerns about food running out also means that vulnerable populations who cannot afford to stockpile, may not find food (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020).

In response to these concerns, Getz, (2022), notes that the UK government has made efforts to provide certain

populations with food parcels and free meals to collect and take home. These populations include high-risk vulnerable individuals such as the elderly who have no support network, and school children of low-income families. The UK government has also reduced restrictions on delivery hours for retailers in order to allow stores to restock with basic food products. Furthermore, the British Retail Consortium (BRC) has reassured the public that despite low inventory of certain food products in local stores, there are no such shortages of food. Similar statements have been made by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In addition, Simon, (2023), notes despite reassurance by the government, stores have made drastic changes by restricting the amount of each product that an individual can buy, providing more than 30,000 new jobs to meet the high pressure of restocking shelves, and setting special shopping hours for the elderly, vulnerable populations and NHS staff. Further changes being implemented include a decrease in the range of products being made by manufacturers, with the aim of focusing on products that are in greater need.

McKean (2024), affirmed that independent supermarkets have also been affected by the high demand on food products. Measures implemented by these local stores include free delivery of food products to customers to avoid panic-buying, putting restrictions on the number of customers allowed in at any given time to avoid overcrowding, and expanding on the number of suppliers whom they buy their products from to avoid food shortage. Although supermarkets have seen a huge demand on food products, restaurants and cafes have been forced to close. As a result, many of these stores are at risk of permanent closure and many of their employees have lost their jobs. The impact of COVID-19 on the food industry has forced Leon, a UK fast-food chain, to change its business model; 65 of its restaurants were said to turn into shops that sell refrigerated ready -meal-type plastic pouches (Arianina and Morris, 2020).

Methodology

The research design adopted for this work is a descriptive research design through which a quantitative approach is employed to source data from the randomly selected respondents. This research permits collection of data from number of respondents as a point in time. It provided self-reported fact about respondents, their feelings, opinions and views. The population of the study comprises of the management and staff of Noktel Resort Hotel and selected guest or customers patronizing the hotel. A total of sixty-four (64) respondents (sample size) was considered for the purpose of this study. This involved random selection of respondents among the staff, management and customers of the hotel. Findings from the sample size are generalized for the population of the study.

The method of data collection employed through the primary source is Questionnaire administered to the staff and management of Noktel Resort Hotel, which was carefully employed to extract as much information as possible in order to make the data valid and reliable. This implies that primary source of data was gathered directly from the respondents. This was achieved through self-administered structured questionnaire that contain both open ended and closed ended questions needed to draw conclusion on the topic of study. Data collected was sorted, coded and statistically analyzed using excel package. Descriptive statistics particularly frequency, percentage and mean were used to describe the impact of disease outbreak on hospitality business operation and the way forward on the operations of hospitality industries. Every ethical policy that guides researches that involves the staff of hospitality establishment was consulted and appropriate measures were taken. The researcher therefore adhered strictly to the rules and regulation guiding visitors at Noktel Resort Hotel.

Presentation of Data and Analysis of Results

The field survey of this work was conducted at the case study selected for this research which is Noktel Resort Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The major population of this study are the staff and management of the hotel out of which sixty-four (64) respondents from the three sects were purposively sampled using questionnaire as the main data collection instrument. The field survey was conducted across five working days to allow all the sampled respondents ample time and opportunity to be part of the survey because all the staff cannot be on duty at the same time.

Proceeding from the field survey, Table1 reveals that majority of the respondents are between ages 26 – 35 which amounts to 40.6%, 21.9% are between ages 16 – 25 while the older ages combine for 27.5% of the respondents who are from ages 36 to 56 and above. As regards their gender, male respondents amount to 40.6% while 59.4% are female. The singles edge the marital status distribution with a massive 34.3% more that the married respondents who are 26.6% of the sampled size. A very significant number of the respondents are skilled with 42.2% being an ND/NCE holder; about 22% are degree holders. Furthermore, about 30% of the employees have spent between 2-4 years at the hotel, while a very significant 15.6% have spent 4 years and more while working with Noktel Resort Hotel. On the other hand, Figure1 shows that the majority of the staff are from the Food and Beverage Department which comprises the kitchen, restaurant and bar with 25% of the respondents. The next most represented department is the Housekeeping Department with 16% of the respondents while the admin and management staff represent 9% of the total respondents.

Table 1: Showing the demographic characteristics of the respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
<i>Age</i>	16 – 25	14	21.9%
	26 – 35	26	40.6%
	36 – 45	11	17.2%
	46 – 55	7	10.9%
	56 & above	6	9.4%
	Total	64	100%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	26	40.6%
	Female	38	59.4%
	Total	64	100%
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	39	60.9%
	Married	17	26.6%
	Others	8	12.5%
	Total	64	100%
<i>Educational Qualification</i>	O'level	13	20.3%
	ND/NCE	27	42.2%
	First Degree	14	21.9%
	Masters	4	6.2%
	Others	6	9.4%
	Total	64	100%
<i>Length of employment</i>	0 - 6 months	09	14.0%
	6 months – 1 year	14	21.9%
	1 – 2 years	12	18.8%
	2 – 4 years	19	29.7%
	4 years and above	10	15.6%
	Total	64	100%

Distribution of Staff Department

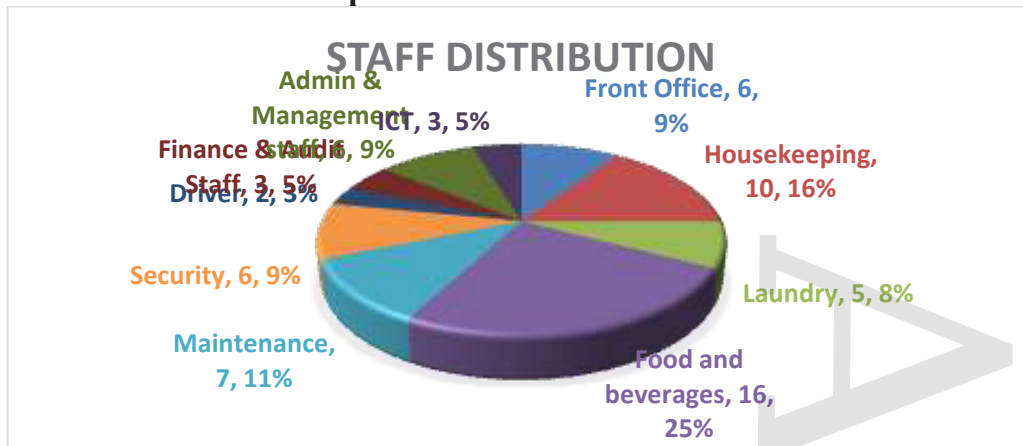


Figure 1: Showing the distribution of the respondents across each department

Source: Field work, 2024

Analysis of Research Data

The level of patronage experienced by Noktel Resort Hotel before Covid-19 pandemic

Table 2: The performance of Noktel Resort Hotel before Covid-19

S/N	Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Noktel Resort Hotel experienced great patronage and high occupancy rate before Covid-19 pandemic	Yes	43	67.2%
		Partially	18	28.1%
		No	3	4.7%
		Total	64	100%
2.	Noktel Resort Hotel met there average daily sales before Covid-19 pandemic	Yes	42	65.6%
		Partially	14	21.9%
		No	8	12.5%
		Total	64	100%
3.	Noktel Resort Hotel had frequent full in-house guest before Covid-19 pandemic	Yes	34	53.1%
		Partially	18	28.1%
		No	12	18.8%
		Total	64	100%
4.	Other departments within the hotel were well patronized by the guest while staying at Noktel Resort Hotel	Yes	46	71.9%
		Partially	16	25%
		No	2	3.1%
		Total	64	100
5.	Noktel Resort Hotel gives discount on their accommodation rate to encourage patronage	Yes	31	48.4%
		Partially	24	37.5%
		No	9	14.1%
		Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

The **Table 2** above shows that Noktel Resort Hotel experienced great patronage before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic as indicated by 67.2% of the respondents. A further 65.6% agreed that Noktel Resort Hotel met there average daily sales before Covid-19 pandemic. Equally, 53.1% expressed that Noktel Resort Hotel had frequent full in-house guest before Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, other departments within the hotel were well patronized by the guest while staying at Noktel Resort Hotel before the advent of the last major

disease outbreak as indicated by a massive 71.9% of the respondents. With the aid of a reasonable discount, the hotel encouraged patronage of regular guest and those willing to make a repeat visit as submitted by 48.4% of the respondents.

The effect of Covid-19 pandemic on the operation of Noktel Resort Hotel

Table 3: Does Covid-19 pandemic have any effect on the operations of the hospitality industry?

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	49	76.6%
No	3	4.7%
Partially	12	18.7%
Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

The **Table 3** above indicates that 76.6% of the respondents agreed that Covid-19 had an effect on the operations of the hospitality industry and 18.7% of the respondents partially agreed that Covid-19 had effects on the operations of the hospitality industry while 4.7% of the respondents think otherwise that Covid-19 did not have any effect on the operations of the hospitality industry.

Table 4: If yes, can these effects be classified as positive or negative?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	0	0%
Negative	10	20.4%
Both	39	79.6%
Total	49	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

The **Table 4** shows the response of the 49 respondents that chose 'Yes' in the previous table. It can be deduced from the table that 0% of the respondents said that Covid-19 pandemic has no positive effect, 20.4% said it has negative effect while 79.6% said it has both negative and positive effects.

Table 5: Positive effects of Covid-19 on the operations of the hospitality industry

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Renovation of hotel</i>	5	12.8%
<i>Restructuring/repairs</i>	6	15.4%
<i>More safety precautions</i>	10	25.6%
<i>Staff training</i>	6	15.4%
<i>Better marketing of hotel</i>	5	12.8%
<i>Getting more alternative</i>	3	7.7%
<i>Nil</i>	4	10.3%
Total	39	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 5 shows the responses on if there are positive effect of Covid-19 on the operations of the hospitality Industry. It can be deduced that out of the 39 responses, 10 respondents which amount to 25.6% opined that more safety precautions were developed for guest and employee's safety in the hotel, some of which are still in practice till date. The respondents also believed that the hotel used the opportunity to do some renovation, repairs and maintenance; while they also trained their staff in the process.

Table 6: Negative effect of Covid-19 on the operations of the hospitality industry

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Reduced sales and patronage</i>	12	24.5%
<i>Staff reduction through job loss</i>	10	20.4%
<i>Loss of client/ customers</i>	9	18.4%
<i>Salary reduction</i>	10	20.4%
<i>Skeletal operation in F&B department</i>	5	10.2%
<i>High cost of materials</i>	3	6.1%
Total	49	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

The **Table 6** above shows the various responses on the negative effects of Covid-19 on the operations of the hospitality industry that include reduced sales through loss of patronage as a result of restriction in movement as indicated by 24.5% of the respondents. This consequently led to other issues such as salary reduction, and ultimately job loss for some of the employees which both appear at a similar rate of 20.4%.

Strategies employed by Noktel Resort Hotel in ensuring customer patronage during pandemic

Table 7: Strategies of ensuring customer patronage during Covid-19 pandemic

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Options</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Social distancing within Noktel Resort Hotel premises	Yes	43	67.2%
		Partially	18	28.1%
		No	3	4.7%
		Total	64	100%
2.	Provision of hand wash basin at strategic places within and outside the hotel	Yes	46	71.9%
		Partially	16	25%
		No	2	3.1%
		Total	64	100%
3.	Free customized nose mask and mini sanitizer	Yes	44	68.8%
		Partially	12	18.7%
		No	8	12.5%
		Total	64	100%
4.	50% discount on all accommodation, spa, salon and gym	Yes	36	56.3%
		Partially	18	28.1%
		No	10	15.6%
		Total	64	100%
5.	Free delivery for any online order from Food and Beverage Department	Yes	46	71.9%
		Partially	16	25%
		No	2	3.1%
		Total	64	100
6.	Driver pickup for online accommodation booking within Ilorin metropolis	Yes	31	48.4%
		Partially	24	37.5%
		No	9	14.1%
		Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

The measures designed by Noktel Resort Hotel against future pandemic

Table 8: How can we rate the positive effect of Covid-19 on the operations of the hospitality industry after the pandemic?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High	40	62.5%
Low	24	37.5 %
Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 8 above indicates that 62.5% of the respondents agreed that Covid '19 has positive effect on the operations of the hospitality industry after Covid-19 pandemic while 37.5% respondents did not agree that Covid-19 has any positive effect on the operations of the hospitality industry after the pandemic.

Table 9: How can we rate the negative effect of Covid-19 on the operations of the hospitality industry after the pandemic?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High	45	70.3%
Low	19	29.7%
Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 9 above indicates that 70.3% of the respondent agreed that Covid-19 had high negative effect on the operations of the hospitality industry after the pandemic while, 29.7% of the respondents agreed that Covid-19 had low negative effect on the operations of the hospitality industry after the pandemic.

Table 10: is the hospitality industry thriving like it was after the occurrence of Covid-19?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	84.4%
No	10	15.6%
Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 10 shows that 84.4% of the respondents agreed that the hospitality industry is thriving like it was before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. The respondents affirmed in the table above that there is a way forward for the hospitality industry to thrive more.

Table 11: Way forward for the hospitality industry operations to thrive

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Setting realistic target	5	7.8%
Adequate adverts and promotion	9	14.1%
Employee motivation	12	18.7%
Improvement in customers' services	13	20.3%
Restructuring and re-strategizing of operation	17	26.6%
Collaboration among professional hospitality business owners	8	12.5%
Total	64	100%

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 11 shows the suggested ways forward for the hospitality industry, 20.3 % said there should be improvement in customers' services, 14.1% said adequate adverts and promotion, 26.6% said they should restructure and re-strategize hospitality operation, 12.5% said there should be collaboration among professional hospitality business owners, 7.8% also said they should set a realistic target, while 18.7% talk about employee motivation.

Discussion of Findings

Carrying out this research on evaluating the effect of covid-19 pandemic on the operations of the hospitality industry, twenty questionnaires were given to respondents and all were filled and returned. It shows that gender that filled most of the questionnaires were male. This also indicates that the hospitality industry is a 24hours service industry that runs shift, therefore it is most favourable and convenient for the male than the females. Also both Christians and Muslims work in the industry as it is a service of hospitality and not the lay man's thought of hotels generally.

All respondents agreed that Covid-19 affects the hospitality industry, and of course not only the hospitality sector as seen in the reviews, but all the economy and non- economy sector of the world. These effects are also classified as negative. Though some respondents believed it has both positive and negative but the negative seems to be more than the positive effects on the hospitality industry. This finding was supported by Gursoy and Chi (2020), as they affirm that disease outbreaks usually have both positive and negative impact. Although, the negative usually outweighs the positive.

Aside the negative effects, some respondents said the occurrence of Covid-19 has positively helped the hospitality industry to make restructuring and renovations on their hotel possible. Thus, Covid-19 also made hotels to reposition themselves against competitors. This finding is buttress by Ishmael (2020), who asserts that Covid-19 gave many hospitality establishments the opportunity to re-strategies their operations with special attention on physical development. Similarly, Falabietal., (2018) also suggest that physical environment alongside quality of service contribute to customer satisfaction in hospitality establishment.

The findings also revealed some negative effect of the pandemic on the hospitality industry, but loss of job/ staff reduction/ employment lay off and low patronage of hotel services appeared more. This is so because, the hospitality industry is a home away from home. Therefore, if people/ guests are not away from home, there will be no patronage in the hotel. Also, if there are no patronage, staffs will be redundant reason they have to down size. At the peak of the pandemic, human interactions were severely restricted by nationwide lockdown, socio distancing became the new mode of human interaction as the death toll kept rising and these greatly affected the hospitality industry. Adepoju (2020), supports these findings by indicating that job loss was one of the most detrimental effects of Covid-19 pandemic as it affected all service sector including hospitality. Folorunso etal., (2024) opine that the industry is reshaping post Covid-19 as many vacant positions within hospitality sector are been massively filled.

Weighing both the positive and negative effects during the pandemic on the hospitality industry, the negative is higher than the positive effects. The negative effect was also seen to be higher still after the pandemic but, there is a way forward for the hospitality industry because the industry does not offer only accommodation, which is the well-known aspect of the industry. There are other aspects that can be leverage on for effective operations as posits by Umanah, (2022). They include repackaging of the services provided and marketing these services to the public. These will help in total resurgence of the industry. These also can be effective if all the stakeholders in the hospitality industry come together to brain storm on how these can be achievable

Conclusion and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and lasting impact on the hospitality industry, with hotels and resorts facing unprecedented challenges in maintaining their operations and profitability. The case study of Noktel Resort Hotel provides valuable insights into how a leading hotel has navigated this crisis and implemented strategies to mitigate the negative effects. The research findings demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a more severe and persistent impact on hotel firms' performance compared to previous disease outbreaks. Noktel Resort Hotel's level of patronage and occupancy rates reflect the significant decline in demand and revenue experienced during the pandemic. However, the hotel's proactive crisis management approach, including cost-cutting measures, flexible marketing strategies, and strategic decision-making, has enabled it to weather the storm more effectively than some of its competitors.

The insights gained from this study can serve as a valuable resource for the hospitality industry as a whole. By understanding the specific challenges faced by Noktel Resort Hotel and the strategies it has employed, other hotels and resorts can develop their own crisis preparedness plans and enhance their resilience in the face of future disease outbreaks or other disruptive events. As the hospitality industry continues to recover and adapt to the post-pandemic landscape, the lessons learned from this study will be crucial in guiding hotels and resorts towards a more sustainable and resilient future. The findings of this study can inform policymakers, industry associations, and hotel management teams as they work to strengthen the hospitality sector's ability to withstand and overcome the impact of disease outbreaks and other crises.

Based on the finding of the study and the research summary on the effect of disease outbreaks on hospitality operations, focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic and the Noktel Resort Hotel case study, the following strategic action points are recommended by this study:

1. Hotels and resorts should develop detailed crisis management plans that outline specific strategies and protocols for responding to disease outbreaks and other disruptive events. These plans should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant and effective.
2. Adopting flexible business models, such as the ALFO (assets-light, fee-orientated) approach, can help hotels mitigate the impact of disease outbreaks by reducing fixed costs and increasing agility. This can involve outsourcing certain operations, entering into management contracts, or franchising arrangements.
3. Implementing robust health and safety measures is crucial for restoring guest confidence and ensuring the well-being of employees and visitors. Hotels should follow industry guidelines and best practices for cleaning, sanitization, and social distancing, and communicate these measures effectively to guests.
4. Hotels should explore opportunities to diversify their revenue streams to reduce reliance on traditional sources like room bookings. This can include expanding food and beverage offerings, developing new amenities or experiences, or exploring alternative accommodation options like extended stays or vacation rentals.
5. Accelerating digital transformation can help hotels streamline operations, enhance guest experiences, and improve data-driven decision-making. Investing in technologies such as contactless check-in/check-out, mobile apps, and revenue management systems can provide a competitive edge in a post-pandemic landscape.
6. Encouraging collaboration within the hospitality industry can help hotels share best practices, pool resources, and advocate for supportive policies and regulations. Industry associations and government agencies should facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms and provide guidance on crisis management and recovery strategies.

Finally, if the hotel industry implements these recommendations, their businesses can be more resilient, adapt to the evolving needs of guests, and position itself for long-term success in the face of disease outbreaks and other challenges in the future.

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