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## ETHNO-POLITICAL CRISES SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AND HOTEL ROOM OCCUPANCY IN NIGER STATE

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### ABSTRACT

Ethno-political conflicts which are conflicts informed predominantly by ethnic and religious implications are common and often violent. Ethno-political crises survival strategies are a wide range of different strategies and tactics that hotel owners make use of to give their businesses the best chance of survival. This research work set out to assess the survival strategies adopted by hotels in Niger State to mitigate the effect of ethno-political crises room occupancy. The researcher made use of structured questionnaire as the research instrument. Out of the two hundred and one hotels in Niger State that spread across the three (3) senatorial district, ten (10) were selected from each of these senatorial districts bringing the total sample of the hotels studied to thirty (30). The questionnaires were administered to five management staff of each of the hotels bringing the total sample of the respondents to one hundred and fifty (150). Out of the one hundred questionnaires administered, 145 (97%) were validly filled and returned. Analysis of findings using Pearson correlation coefficient and ANOVA indicates that there is a positive relationship between the ethno-political crises survival strategy adopted by hotel in Niger State and hotel room occupancy in the state. Delivering religious sermons using Public Address Systems (PAS) should be abolished. This is because it constitutes a terrible nuisance to people of other religious faiths. Besides, some of the contents of this sermon breed ethno-political violence

## **INTRODUCTION**

Crises are an inevitable element of corporate life (Zech, 2016). It is not a question of if or whether an organization will experience a crisis; it is only a matter of what type of crisis will occur, what form it will take, and how and when it will happen. Structured crisis management may however reduce the impact, duration and cost of these crises. The hotel industry being part of the vast tourism industry is particularly prone to external shocks that are sometimes beyond the control of its managers. Extreme and sudden decline in demand is one of the probable impacts of these external shocks (Zech, 2016). The tourism industry is an amalgamation of various sectors offering travel related services. The uniqueness of the industry in providing numerous services has made it a multifaceted activity which touches many areas of human life (Ezenagu, 2018). In other words, the tourism industry involves the business of providing tours and services for persons travelling locally and abroad. The provision of these services by different sectors within the tourism industry sets tourism as a global industry with the highest employer of labour. In view of this, tourism acts as one of the most viable economic industries generating millions of dollars annually which contributes to the growth of numerous economies around the globe. In 2013, tourism generated large numbers of international arrivals which amounted to 1, 087 million with prospects of international arrivals rising to 1.8 billion by the year 2030. This includes hotel patronage and by extension performance (Kester, 2014).

Travel accrues numerous benefits to any destination, one of which is the creation of critical employment opportunities for millions of people. Knowing the benefits of developing the tourism sector, the Nigerian government has since the era of democracy in 1999 not relented in the pursuit of developing its tourism potential so as to diversify its oil monopoly economy. Prominent among tourism products is hotels. The primary purpose of hotels is to provide travelers with shelter, food, refreshment, and similar services and goods, offering on commercial basis things that are customarily furnished within households but unavailable to people on a journey away from home. Historically hotels have also taken on many other functions, serving as business exchanges, centers of sociability, places of public assembly and deliberation, decorative showcases, political headquarters, vacation spots, and permanent residences. The hotel as an institution, and hotels as an industry have transformed travel in Nigeria, hastened the settlement of the continent, and extended the influence of urban culture (encyclopedia.com).

Hotels are one of the fastest growing segments of the hospitality sub-sector of the tourism industry and are rapidly growing in diversity and popularity since the economic boom of the 1960s. Today large numbers of people travel to hotels situated in exotic and beautiful destinations in order to accommodate and enjoy themselves and escape from their daily routine (Ali, Omar and Amin, 2013). In this context, the core principle of the hotel is the creation of an environment that will promote and enhance a feeling of well-being and enjoyment. Furthermore, two characteristics of a hotel can be identified to include; sufficient indoor amenities including quality services, convenient entertainment, unique location in terms of climate, scenery, and recreational attractions and safety and security within the hotel and its surroundings (Ali *et al*, 2013).

In view of the above, safety and security management has emerged as a vital tool among businesses. The overriding concern that drives the hospitality industry is the provision of adequate safety and security to guests. Many believe that adequate safety and security is a major determinant for promoting destination image and increasing patronage. Safety refers to the absence of threat and physical or emotional harm as a result of such issues as medical complications, road traffic accidents, fire, electric shock, etc. Security on the other hand is the absence of threat from physical or emotional harm as a result of violence, conflict and violent crime among others (Ndama, 2019). Going further, Ndama (2019) opined that some other researchers also treated security as an element of supply and a fundamental condition for hosting guests. Nigeria is synonymous with deep divisions which cause major political issues to be vigorously and violently contested along the lines of intricate ethnic, religious and regional divisions. Issues that raise the most dust are those regarded essential for the existence and the validity of the state. Opposing and contending assemblages have a tendency to assume an exclusionary winner-take-all approach. These issues include the control of state power, allocation of resources and citizenship. As a result, states with such divisions are disposed to be delicate and unstable because almost by definition, they have very little in common with regard to convergence and harmony which are necessary to reduce the centrifugal forces that rip them apart (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). Niger State has been bedeviled by the menace of ethno-political crises since the enactment of the shari'a legal system. Ethno-political violence in Niger State attracted global attention when the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Suleja near Abuja was bombed in April, 2011 and also in the same year, St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla

very close to Suleja was bombed. Both of these had many casualties. Today ethno-political crisis has assumed a greater dimension in Niger state with the escalation of farmer/herder clashes to wanton killing and destruction of properties to abduction of people both on the high ways and in schools all with political connotation. The most recent being the burning to death of Revend Father Achi and the total destruction of his parish house by yet to be identified people. Like the incidence of Madalla, this too has ethno-political connotation. Despite the vulnerability of the hotel industry to the impacts of crises, numerous countries and destinations are relying on it for their development and survival (Karam 2018). This creates pressure on business directors to plan and think strategically during a crisis by managing both the positive opportunities and negative threats that crisis consistently presents. How successful hotel managers are in this direction can be known from performance indicators such as room occupancy, restaurant seat turnover and banquet hall bookings. Hotel room occupancy is the percentage of available rooms that are occupied (booked) during a specified period of time. It is through this Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that a hotel operator can find out about the occupancy status of his property. While a high occupancy rate is usually desirable, a very high occupancy rate may indicate that a property's rooms are underpriced.

As a metric, it is concerned with the percentage of a hotel occupied, and can be used alongside other methods such as ADR (average daily rate) and RevPAR (revenue per available room), as part of a revenue management strategy (Barten, 2023). Two decades ago, hotel salespeople were given a set of targets to meet based upon the total number of rooms they needed to sell. If they met their targets, they were awarded with a bonus. These bonuses were based on how far they exceeded their booking goals, which were expressed as a percentage of rooms occupied. The industry has indeed come a long way. Average daily rate is the average amount paid per room per day for a given period of time. From it, a manager can see the average revenue generated by the rooms booked. It does not include complimentary meals or complimentary rooms, nor does it include revenue from other divisions, such as food and beverage. ADR can help a manager to understand how his current operating performance compares to historical performance or that of other similar properties so that he can make informed decisions about strategic pricing and promotions. However, because ADR doesn't take into account other income or expenses, it gives no insight into overall performance (Guernier, 2023).

On the other hand, RevPAR is revenue per available room. By calculating RevPAR, a manager can measure daily performance in terms of occupancy (number of rooms booked) and ADR (average daily rate). It does not take into account specific room types and rates, or actual occupancy (number of people staying). RevPAR is an important KPI that helps a manager to quickly assess his performance. In other words, it refers to his ability to manage reservations (number of rooms) and room rates (price) to drive revenue. In the event of crises such as ethno-political crisis, a hotel most adopt strategies in order to survive. Business survival strategies are used by both new and established businesses in order to give them the tools, backup plans, and secret weapons that they need to take on the challenging world of business(Adebisi & Bakare, 2019). Each and every business is slightly different, and depending on the location, the industry it falls under, and the size of the business. The first step in employing business survival strategies and tactics is to find which ones would be the most effective for that particular business model. Porter (2008) identified two survival strategies adopted by organizations. One of these strategies is generic strategies. These are strategies adopted by the organization in order to gain advantages in their industry. These strategies were explained by Porter (2008) are further divided into three. The strategies were used in gaining competitiveness and getting a greater market share compared to other competitors. These strategies are cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy as is in the case of ethno-political crises. Firms are open to two major competitive strategies, which are low cost and differentiation. An organization that follows any one of the two strategies is referred to as a pure strategic organization and such an organization will achieve an above average rating in its performance. Porter(2008) argued further that the pre-conditions for the two strategies differ as well as what an organization will invest to adopt either of the strategies.

Organizations that do not have a specific strategy will find itself stuck in the middle and this will have a negative impact on its performance. In line with this, some researchers argued against its view that an organization can combine strategies in order to perform excellently in its industry as compared to an organization with only one strategy. All strategies have what determines them, as cost leadership is determined by organizations' structural factors while product differentiation is determined by customers' preferences and an organization can combine these two strategies for better performance and sustainability. Turbulent environment such as that of

Niger State that is plagued by ethno-political crises can result in the changing of strategies in order to attain sustainability.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Nigeria as a country is both multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and also multi-cultural. Conflict is regarded by many as a social phenomenon that is not easily avoided in any society as no society is completely devoid of conflicts. The extent to which conflicts occurs however differs from one society to another. Perpetual reoccurrence of conflicts in Nigeria at large, and Northern Nigeria in particular, has been attributed to colonial history that brought people of different background and history to live together. Thus, struggle over developmental needs between different ethnic groups raised the level of violence since mutual tolerance has been reduced to its lowest ebb. Studies focusing on the intricate dynamics of social existence from precolonial time to the present time have a link between the coming together of various ethnic groups and what large number of people are witnessing in the north today. It is actually the manifestation of enormous tensions, contradictions, instability and system failure that exist in Nigeria as a whole. For example, Adamu and Moniruzzaman, (2016) stated that among the legacies of colonialism was the proliferation of identity-based conflict in which many lives and properties have been lost.

The threat of danger that accompanies political turmoil tends to intimidate potential travelers severely (Sönmez, 1998). This also extends to hotel patronage and by extension their performance. Hotels however strive to adopt measures to stay afloat. While some of these studies are done outside Nigeria, others are centred in some regions in Nigeria. For instance, in China in June 1989, student protest brought about a clash between them and the Chinese government. The world's view of the government of China became very negative making 11,500 travelers that would have come to that country to cancel their flight (Hall and O'Sullivan, 1996). The violent conflicts in Nigeria with particular emphasis on Niger State has had a devastating impact on many facets of the socio-economic life of the people. The study therefore set out to unravel the survival strategies adopted by hotels in Niger State to counter the impact of ethno-political crises and to ascertain whether or not these have been able to mitigate the negative outcome of the crises on the patronage and by extension the performance of hotels in the state.

This research set out to accomplish the following objectives which are to investigate the:

1. extent to which counter-advertising impacts on hotel room occupancy in Niger State
2. effect of personal communication on hotel room occupancy in Niger State
3. impact of public enlightenment programme on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

Based on the objectives, the researcher proposed the following hypotheses:

- HO<sub>1</sub>: Counter advertising does not have significant relationship with hotel room occupancy in Niger State
- HO<sub>2</sub>: Direct communication has no significant relationship with hotel room occupancy in Niger State
- HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between public enlightenment and hotel room occupancy in Niger State

These hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **The Concept of Ethnicity**

Williams (2001) views ethnicity as ancient and ubiquitous and believes that commentaries on ethnic differences have been highly variable over time and place. Putting it differently, Kalejaiye & Alliyu (2013) describe ethnicity as the term used to describe the segmented human groups who engage in a particular type of social relationship. Azeez (2004) sees ethnicity as a sense of fellow feeling that has its foundation in the combined remembrance of past experience and a common hope and desire for the future. Ethnicity has to do with origin of a people. Thus, it is the existence of the group that makes ethnicity possible as ethnicity does not exist outside the unit or group that embodies it. Ethnicity could also be seen as the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation. Thus, for Adegbami & Uche (2015), ethnicity is a readymade weapon for actualizing group desires within a Nation-State and a careful and deliberate attempt by social actors to outsmart other competing groups in the struggle to control the scarce economic resources of the state. Therefore, ethnicity is not necessarily due to "biological attachment" but the result of the interaction within the external environment (Brubaker, Loveman, & Stamatov, 2004).

The term has been used variously to signify 'nation,' 'race,' 'religion,' or 'people,' but the central generic meaning is that of collective cultural distinctiveness. For the purpose of this work, the researcher shall use interchangeably the word "ethny" along with "ethnic group". An ethny here is a culturally distinctive collectivity, larger than a kinship unit, whose members claim a common origin or descent. The prototype is a local endogamous population sharing cultural traits that differentiate it from other collectivities. From such groupings, more extended ethnies develop by nepotism, extended endogamy, fictive kinship, descent myths, political enclosures, economic linkages and territorial expansion. For modern large-scale ethnies the 'symbolic' boundaries can be quite vague and elastic but the essential retained qualities are ascribed membership (by birth) and cultural identity.

The concept of ethnics denotes ethnic allegiance, a feeling of attachment to one's ethnic group. Such loyalty ordinarily carries with it the willingness to support and act on behalf of the ethnic group. Drawing from the above, ethnicist involves a degree of obligation and is often accompanied by a rejecting attitude towards those regarded as outsiders. This, in fact, constitutes the basis of ethnic discrimination and ethnic prejudice found in multi-ethnic societies, such as Nigeria.

Therefore, ethnic group is any group which is defined or set apart by race, religion or a defined origin or combination of some of these categories. For instance, an ethnic group like the Yoruba is said to be descendants of Oduduwa with its ancestral home at Ile-Ife. an ethnic group comprises people who share a unique social and cultural heritage which is passed from one generation to the other. Ethnic group is identified by distinctive patterns of family life language, recreation, religion and other customs which differentiate them from others. Ethnicity is therefore a continuum as its characteristics remain from generation to generation. Ethnic group consists of interacting members who belong to a named or labelled social group with whose interest they identify, and which manifests certain aspects of a unique culture while constituting a part of a wider society. The recent happenings in Nigeria have brought this definition to the fore as ethnicity has become a veritable tool and basis for canvassing for political as well as economic power.

Ethnicity leads to primordial sentiments in multi-ethnic society. This position is supported by the theory of ethnocentrism. On a general note, the theory of ethnocentrism simply denotes differentiation according to



origin. This is to say that it is a kind of behavior where a group of people look down on others and discriminate against them. Thus, one can see ethnocentrism as a belief in the unique value and rightness of one's own group. This human attitude manifests in form of prejudice and tribalism (ethnic communalism and conflict). Therefore, as Ndubuisi (2014) put it, group solidarity provides security in situation of potential conflict and informal support when official agencies cannot or will not help. This is why hostility is an important aspect of ethnicity. Destructive competition among ethnic groups gives rise to ethnicity and produces antisocial effects such as jealousy and deprivation. It becomes possible for the in-group to accept the expression of hostility toward the out-group

### **The Concept of Survival Strategies**

Business survival strategies are the various ideas or concepts that business owners make use of to give their businesses the best chance of survival particularly during an ugly situation (Stanley, 2021). Survival strategies are very important to the growth of any organization that is starting or already in existence. Without strategies laid down as a guideline by the organization, there won't be actions to be carried out nor targeted goals to attain (iProject master, 2023). Despite the best efforts to manage a business in ways that will help it survive and thrive, there will be times when threats and problems require immediate attention. These difficulties may come about because of something has not done while running the company such as hiring an ineffective manager or introducing an ill-fated product. Alternatively, they may come about because of something beyond your control such as an economic downturn or a well-funded competitor or man-made crises such as ethno-political crises (Gartenstein, 2019). Any organization that wants to survive in business therefore would always plan against future problems as well as be ready with strategies that can bring solutions as they show forth in turbulent times. Many organizations have adopted survival strategies that will guide them in their business operations especially in times of difficulties.

In the view of iProject Master (2023), an organization has to select what products it can produce or deliver best, what set of customers and what the customers' needs are and how best they can offer their products and services to their customers. Whether a business is big or small, the task of the enterprise management requires the systematic approach and discipline fostered by business strategies. Therefore, every business organization, must strive to achieve their target goals by planning ahead of time which is

tagged as strategies. This plan is more apt so as to weather the storm in times of crises.

Stanley (2021) is of the view that each and every business is slightly different, and depending on the location, the industry it falls under, and the size of the business, it will be faced with different potential risks that its operator will need to guard against. The first step in employing business survival strategies and tactics is to find which ones would be the most effective for a particular business model, and this can be done through a professional risk assessment. Survival strategies help businesses to get through the rapid fluctuation of business cycle. An organization must embark on competitive strategies to survive in its business environment and adhering to a single strategy could be hazardous to the sustainability of a business. When a hotel establishment combines different strategies, it tends to perform better than when it embarks on pure strategy. This invariably means that an organization must adopt a survival strategy to sustain itself in its turbulent environment. The capability of an organization assists in the achievement of competitive advantage; which is also dependent on how the organization assembles, integrates and deploys its tangible, intangible and personnel resources in order to attain sustainable competitive advantage thereby ensuring its survival in its turbulent environment.

Porter (1985) opines that organizations that do not have a specific strategy will find itself 'stocked in the middle' and this will have a negative impact on its performance. Murray (1988) mentioned that all strategies have what determines it, as cost leadership is determined by organizations' structural factors while product differentiation is determined by customers' preferences and an organization can combine these two strategies for better performance and sustainability. Fjeldstad and Haanoes (2001) consider that a turbulent environment can result in changing strategies in order to attain sustainability. It was also noted by Anand and Ward (2004), Parnell and Hershey (2005) that a combination of strategies can allow for strength and flexibility in an organization, which in turn brings about sustainability. Friedland and Rubin (2022); Stanley (2021) identified some survival strategies hotel operators adopt in times of crises. Some of the items in this model relevant to this work are: monitor cash, review contracts and mind maturities, being diligent with operating expenses, reward cross-selling and up-selling by employees, invest in technology, operate each department as a standalone business and implement next-generation talent models

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

This research work is anchored on Karl Marx's conflict theory and Herbert Spencer's Survival-based theory:

### **Karl Marx Conflict Theory**

Conflict theory, first propounded by Karl Marx, is a theory that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. This theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. Those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within a society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power. This theory tends to recognize the menace of banditry, kidnapping and the heinous activities of herdsmen in Niger State. This is because as a lot of people have opined, these evils have not been brought down because they seem to enjoy the tacit support of the power that be.

### **The Survival-Based Theory**

This theory, according to Abdallah (2010) was initially introduced in the field of economics. Abdallah (2010) went further to say that researchers such as Schumpeter, Alchian, Harrod and Marshall were among the first who introduced the idea of evolutionary thinking and natural selection into the concept of economics. The concept of survival - based theory or "survival of the fittest" theory was originally developed by Herbert Spencer. This theory, known as Social Darwinism which was quite popular during late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, emphasized on the notion that by following the principle of nature, only the best and the fittest of competitors will win, which in the end would lead to the improvement of the social community as a whole. Social Darwinism assumed it is normal for the competition to behave in hedonistic ways to produce the fittest business, who survived and prospered by successfully adapting to its environment or become the most efficient and economic producer of all. Hence, ruthless business rivalry and unprincipled politics such as mapping out strategies to survive in the midst of crises is acceptable under this assumption.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

In a study titled, **survival strategies and sustainability of small and medium enterprises in a volatile environment carried out** by Adebisi & Bakare (2019) in Lagos, the researchers examined the survival strategies and

sustainability of small and medium enterprises in a volatile business environment using a quantitative approach. The results reveal that there is a significant and positive relationship between survival strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria.

In his work titled the **Effect of Political Instability on Tourism – A case Study of Limbe Wildlife Centre, South West Region-Cameroon**, Abam (2020) discovered that the destination image of a country influences the movement of tourists and extension the patronage of tourism products.

Ini (2023) in her work titled **Customers safety concern and the patronage of tourism outfits in South-south Nigeria aimed at investigating the extent to which safety considerations by customers relate to the patronage of tourism outfits in South-south, Nigeria**. revealed a high relationship between the dependent variable (patronage of tourism outfits such as hotels and restaurants) and the independent variable (safety considerations).

In their work titled **the menace of Boko Haram on hospitality patronage in Nigeria and its effect on health and health care**, Adedayo & Adedayo (2015) observed that the hospitality industry nationwide has been having low patronage. In carrying out this research, the researchers made use of questionnaires as their research instrument. Analysis of data generated shows that the low patronage especially on hotels has been as a result of the insecurity occasioned by the Boko Haram Islamic sect.

Nwagbala, Ifureze& Okafor (2022) carried out research titled, **insecurity in Nigeria, and business sustainability in selected hotels in Awka, Anambra State.**, the researchers anchored the research study on Doyle democratic peace theory. Survey research design and simple random sampling technic were used to select 12 hotels from a total of 125 hotels in Awka. Hypothesis testing was done using Pearson correlation coefficient and simple regression analysis. Findings reveal that there is significant effect of insecurity on the performance of hotels in Awka indicating negative relationship between weak security system and customer satisfaction. They concluded that insecurity affects stable operation of business as it could result to threats to both lives of both workers and customers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study aimed to assess the survival strategies adopted by hotels to stem the impact of ethno-political crises on hotel patronage in Niger State, North Central Nigeria. The operational framework provides an overview of the

research design, variables, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques to be employed in this study.

The study being a qualitative one made use of primary data and these were obtained from questionnaires. These allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between ethno-political conflicts survival strategies and hotel patronage in Niger State.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

In this research, the research instruments used was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to be administered to four (4) preferred personnel of each of the selected hotels in each of the senatorial districts of Niger State. The research instrument - the questionnaire -was drawn to a 4-point Likert scale. The categories of personnel the research instrument was administered to are: the hotel General Manager, the Front Office/Reception Manager, the Food and Beverage Manager and the Executive Housekeeper. These personnel were selected because they are the sectional heads involved in the day to day running of their respective hotels.

### **Population of the Study**

Records available at the Niger State Tourism Board and Niger State Board of internal Revenue show that there are two hundred and one (201) hotels and guest houses in Niger State. Some of the local councils are without any functioning hotel or guest house because of the remoteness of their location and the activities of bandits and kidnappers. These brought the study population of the respondents in the two hundred and one (201) hotels in Niger State to eight hundred and four (804).

### **Sample Size Determination**

The size of the sample used in this study was determined using cluster, purposive and random sampling techniques. Cluster sampling was carried out using the three (3) senatorial zones in Niger State. Using this technique, ten (10) hotels were selected from each of the senatorial zones which are A, B, and C which are Niger South, East and West respectively.

The researcher used probability sampling technique to give each of the 10 hotels in each senatorial district in Niger State an equal chance of being selected as spelt out by Anyanwu (2000). The researcher selected the samples using the table random numbers to prevent selection bias. To do this, the researcher listed the hotels in each senatorial zone in alphabetical

order and allocated numbers to them beginning from 001 to select the specific hotels that formed the sample. The researcher also adopted purpose sampling technique to selected four management staff from each of the hotels selected.

### **Reliability of the Study Instrument**

One of the tests of consistency in reliability is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The researcher conducted reliability test on the same initial sample using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The study calculated alpha coefficient for each dimension of the questionnaire as well as for the total questionnaire and the interview questions. The results indicated that alpha coefficients of all dimensions and total alpha coefficient for questionnaire and the interview questions are above 0.65, which indicates satisfactory internal consistency making the research instrument reliable. The strong internal consistency reliability for the revised scales indicated that the retained items measure the same constructs, suggesting the possibility of the stability of the results that can result from the tools. Thus, the questionnaire and the interview questions became valid and reliable in its final form for application to the basic study sample.

### **Procedure for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection was the structured questionnaire which was administered by hand to the respondents who were the Hotel General Managers, the Front Office/Reception Managers, the Food and Beverage Managers, the Executive House Keepers and the Chief Security Officer. In all, a total of one hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the selected respondents in the thirty (30) hotels across the three (3) senatorial zones in Niger State.

In-depth interviews were also conducted using the same format.

### **Method of Statistical Analysis of Data**

Data generated will be analyzed using frequency table, simple percentage, bar chart, ANOVA and regression to test the relationship between the variables.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A total of 150 structured copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents which were made up of the Hotel General Managers, the Front Office/Reception Managers, the Food and Beverage Managers and the Executive Housekeepers. Fifty copies of the research instrument were administered to the respondents in each of the of the senatorial districts in

Niger State bringing the total to one hundred and fifty (150) out of which one hundred and forty-five (145) (97%) were successfully retrieved.

**Table 1. Respondent’s perspective on the extent of the effect of counter advertising on hotel room occupancy in Niger State**

S/N		4 (SA)	3 (A)	2 (D)	1 (SD)
1	Counter-advertising increases the rate of advance reservation	141	3	1	0
2	Counter-advertising increases length of stay of registered guests	140	3	1	1
3	Counter-advertising changes the mindset of ourists towards overnight stay	139	4	0	2
4	Counter-advertising fosters the patronage of other hotel products	143	1	1	0
5	Counter-advertising increases the number of chance guests	144	1	0	0

Source: Researcher’s field work (2023).

From the table above, 141 (97%) of the respondents strongly agreed that counter-advertising increases the rate of advance reservation. 3 (0.02%) of the respondents agreed and 1 (0.007%) disagreed. 140 (97%) of the respondents strongly agreed that counter-advertising increases the length of stay of the registered guests, 3 (0.002%) agreed, 1 (0.007%) disagreed and 1 (0.007%) strongly disagreed. In the same vein, 139 (96%) respondents strongly agreed that counter-advertising changes the mindset of tourists towards overnight stay, 4 (0.028%) agreed and 2 (0.014%) strongly disagreed. Also 143 (99%) respondents strongly agreed that counter-advertising fosters the patronage of other hotel products, 1 (0.007%) agreed and 1 (0.007%) disagreed. 144 (99%) respondents strongly agreed that counter-advertising increases the number of chance guests and 1 (0.007%) agreed. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between counter-advertising and hotel room occupancy in Niger state.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS1 (HO<sub>1</sub>)

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate

1	.860 <sup>a</sup>	.740	.716	.44776
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a. Predictors: (Constant): Room occupancy

From the above summary table, the correlation value is 0.860 and the R-square value is 0.740. This is very high, an indication that there is a strong relationship between counter advertising and room occupancy in hotels in Niger State.

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.019	1	.019	.096	.012 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	28.670	143	.200		
	Total	28.690	144			

a. Dependent Variable: Counter advertising

b. Predictors or independent variable: (Constant): Room occupancy

From the above ANOVA table, the p-value is 0.012 meaning there is relationship between counter-advertising and hotel room occupancy in Niger State. The researcher therefore rejects Ho1 and conclude that counter-advertising has positive effect on hotel room occupancy in Niger State. This is line with the finding from the study carried out by Ngetich (2009). The study revealed that various forms of advertisement may be employed by hospitality firms in times of crises such as ethno-political crises. These include electronic, print, brochure, website among others. The study further revealed that these different methods of advertisement have positive effect on the sales of hotel products and services in terms of value and efficiency, increased publicity, income demand among others, an indication of a positive relationship between sales and counter-advertising particularly in times of crises. Hotel managers also need to take more definitive action in order to fully exploit the potential social of media as advertisement tool (Dotsey and Worlako, 2022).



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**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.716	.145		32.511	.050
Room occupancy	-.025	.082	-.026	-.310	.757

a. Dependent Variable: Counter-advertising

From the above coefficient table, the fitted model is as follows:

Counter-advertising = 4.71-0.025 hotel room occupancy. The coefficient table above further corroborates the result of the ANOVA table.

Table 2: Respondent's perspective on the extent of the effect of personal communication with loyal guests on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

S/N		4 (SA)	3 (A)	2 (D)	1 (SD)
1	Personal communication changes guests' mind set about room reservation	141	4	0	0
2	Personal communication instils sense of safety in guests	136	4	1	4
3	Personal communication encourages length of stay of guests	138	4	2	1
4	Personal communication brings about word of mouth advertising	144	1	0	0
5	Personal communication encourages the patronage of indoor games facilities	145	0	0	0
6	Personal communication encourages the patronage of gift and souvenir shops	141	4	0	0

Source: Researcher's field work (2023)

141 (97%) respondents strongly agreed that personal communication with guests changes their minds about room reservation and 4 (0.28%) agreed. 136 (94%) respondents strongly that personal communication with guests instils sense of safety in the guests, 4 (0.028%) agreed, 1 (0.007%) disagreed and 4 (0,028%) strongly disagreed. In the same vein, 138 (95%) respondents strongly agreed that personal communication with guests encourages their length of stay, 4 (0.0028%) agreed, 2 (0.014%) disagreed and 1 (0.007%) strongly disagreed. 144 (99%) respondents strongly agreed that personal communication with guests brings about word of mouth advertising, 1 (0.007%) agreed. All the 145 (100%) respondents strongly

agreed that personal communication with loyal guests encourages the patronage of indoor games facilities. Conversely, 141 (97%) agreed that personal communication with loyal guests encourages the patronage of gifts and souvenir shops, 4 (0.028%) agreed.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 2 (HO<sub>2</sub>)**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.924 <sup>a</sup>	.853	.825	1.03824

a. Predictors: (Constant), Room occupancy

From the above summary table, the correlation value is 0.924 and the R-square value is 0.853 indicating a relationship between direct communication and room occupancy.

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.090	1	.090	.083	.041 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	154.145	143	1.078		
	Total	154.234	144			

a. Dependent Variable: Direct or personal communication

b. Predictors: (Constant), Room occupancy

From the above ANOVA table, the p-value is 0.015 meaning there is relationship between direct communication and hotel room occupancy. The researcher rejects H<sub>0</sub> and conclude that personal or direct communication with hotel guests in Niger State has positive impact on guest patronage. This is in agreement with the finding of Nwadiogha (2021) who discovered that job knowledge, interactive and engagement skills have significant positive effects on customer patronage. This implies that enhancing the capacity of the frontline officers through training can significantly increase customer patronage, market share and boost consumers' confidence on the services provided by four-star hotels. The study concluded that firms in the hospitality industry should continuously improve on the staff knowledge of their jobs and the services they render so as to improve on customer patronage as interpersonal skill is vital for

improved customer patronage, therefore operators and their employees should from time to time attend training and development seminars that will help in building their interactive skills.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.983	.336		5.897	.050
Room occupancy	-.055	.190	-.024	-.288	.774

a. Dependent Variable: Direct communication

From the above coefficient table, the fitted model is as follows:

Direct communication = 1.983-0.055 hotel room occupancy. This also indicates a strong relationship between the two variable, hotel room occupancy and direct communication.

**Table 3: Respondent’s perspective on the extent of the result of public enlightenment programme on hotel room occupancy in Niger State**

S/N		4 (SA)	3 (A)	2 (D)	1 (SD)
1	Public enlightenment programme changes the mindset of religious fundamentalist about hotels as business ventures	141	4	0	0
2	Public enlightenment programme reduces the profiling of hotel guests and staff	139	2	2	2
3	Public enlightenment programme encourages the locals to reserve hotel rooms for their visitors	138	2	3	2
4	Public enlightenment programme reduces the incidences of attack on hotel guests	141	4	0	0
5	Public enlightenment programme changes the mindset of the locals towards people of other religious fates	142	3	0	0
5	Public enlightenment programme brings about liberality towards people of the different political parties	143	2	0	0

Source: Researcher’s field work (2023)

141 (97%) respondents strongly agreed that public enlightenment programme changes the mindset of religious fundamentalists towards hotels as business ventures in Niger State, 4 (0.026%) agreed. 139 (96%). 139 (96%) respondents strongly agreed that public enlightenment programmes reduce the profiling of hotel guests and staff, 2 (0.014%) agreed, 2 (0.014%) disagreed and 2 (0.014%) strongly disagreed. 138 (95%) respondents strongly agreed that public enlighten programmes encourage the locals to reserve hotel rooms for their visitors, 2 (0.014%) agreed, 3 (0.021%) disagreed and 23 (0.014%) strongly disagreed. 141 (97%) respondents strongly agreed that public enlightenment programmes reduce incidences of attack on hotel guests, 4 (0.026%) agreed. 142 (98%) respondents strongly agreed that public enlightenment programme the mindset of the locals towards people od other religious faiths, 3 (0.021%) agreed. 143 (99%) respondents strongly agreed that public enlightenment programmes bring about liberality towards people pf different political parties, 2 (0.0014%) agreed.

This shows that public enlightenment programme has strong impact on hotel room occupancy in Niger State.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS3 (HO<sub>3</sub>)

### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.943 <sup>a</sup>	.889	.837	.98257

a. Predictors: (Constant): Room occupancy

From the above summary table, the correlation value is 0.889 and the R-square value is 0.837

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.689	.318		5.307	.000
Room occupancy	.311	.180	.143	1.727	.016

a. Dependent Variable: Public enlightenment

1	Regression	2.880	1	2.880	2.983	.046 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	138.058	143	.965		
	Total	140.938	144			

a. Dependent Variable: Public enlightenment

b. Predictors: (Constant): Room occupancy

From the above ANOVA table, the p-value is 0.046 meaning there is relationship public enlightenment and hotel room occupancy. The researcher rejects Ho7 and conclude that sponsorship of public enlightenment programme by hotels in Niger state has direct bearing on hotel room occupancy in the state. This agrees with the discovery of Baje (2018). Baje (2018) discovered that the ever-growing gap between the socio-economic status of the political class-cum-corporate titans and the average Nigerian makes it a compelling need for the civil society in collaboration with profit-oriented establishments such as hotels to take up the gauntlet of sustained public enlightenment.

From the above coefficient table, the fitted model is as follows:

Public enlightenment = 1.689+0.311 hotel room occupancy. This shows a strong relationship between public enlightenment programme and hotel room occupancy especially when there are crises such as ethno-political crises.

Table 4: Respondent's perspective on the extent of the results of discounts to guests on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

S/N		4 (SA)	3 (A)	2 (D)	1 (SD)
1	Discounts to guests encourage higher patronage of the room division	145	0	0	0
2	Discounts to guests boost guests' confidence in advance reservation	144	1	0	0
3	Discounts to guests bring about good customer relationship	145	0	0	0

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	40.762	2	20.381	25.714	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	112.548	142	.793		
Total	153.310	144			

a. Dependent Variable: discounts

b. Predictors: (Constant), room occupancy

4	Discounts to guests reduce staff turnover	140	4	0	1
5	discounts to guests encourage customers to take up more expensive rooms	142	3	0	0

Source: Researcher's field work (2023)

The entire 145 (100%) respondents strongly agreed that discount to guests encourages higher patronage of hotel room division in Niger State. 144 (99%) respondents strongly agreed that discount to guests boosts guests' confidence in advance reservation, 1 (0,007%) agreed. All 145 (100) strongly agreed that discount to guests brings about good customer relationship. 140 (97%) respondents strongly agreed that discount to guests reduces staff turnover. 4 (0.026%) agreed and 1 (0.007%) strongly disagreed. 148 (99%) respondents strongly agreed that discount to guests brings about upselling of rooms, 3 (0.021%) agreed. This is an indication that there is a correlation between discounts to guests and room occupancy in hotels in Niger State.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS 4 (H<sub>04</sub>)

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.951 <sup>a</sup>	.904	.891	.89028

a. Predictors: (Constant), room occupancy

From the above summary table, the correlation value is 0.951 and the R-square value is 0.904

From the above ANOVA table, the p-value is 0.000 meaning there is relationship public discount and hotel room occupancy. The researcher

rejects Ho10 and conclude that discounts have a significant positive effect on hotel room occupancy in Niger State.

This finding agrees with that of Preno (2023) who is of the view that in the cutthroat hospitality industry, standing out can be a daunting task. A well-devised hotel discount pricing strategy therefore could be a golden ticket. Lowering room rates, even slightly, in times of crises can dramatically increase demand while piquing the interest of budget-conscious travelers and setting a hotel apart in a crowded market. This strategy is not just about slashing prices; it's about smart pricing that can ultimately reshape the business approach giving a hotel a competitive edge.

Preno (2023) identified the following as the merits of discount pricing in a hotel establishment:

1. **Drive Demand:** Offering discounts and specials will attract more guests, giving a hotel increased occupancy rates and more customers overall.
2. **Increase Revenue:** By playing around with pricing strategies, a hotel can increase the revenue generated from each guest. For instance, it could offer attractive packages combining discounted room rates with other services like conference halls or restaurant vouchers to boost profits.
3. **Increase Loyalty:** Attracting new customers is important, but often the most profitable customers are repeat guests. A good discount pricing strategy can incentivize people to come back and create a loyal following of patrons who become regulars at your hotel.

## CONCLUSION

Ethno-political conflicts are pervasive in a culture and involve a relationship between locally situated parties and larger groups such as Fulani Herdsmen. The conflict is perceived as both an interpersonal problem and a group level problem.

Among the survival strategies adopted by hotels in Niger State top stem the tide of ethno-political crises are advertising countering media narrative on the crises, public enlightenment programme., personal communication with regular guests and discounts. The impact of these on room sales have been remarkable.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the result of this research work, the researcher brings out the following recommendations:

1. In addition to counter advertising carried out over the local radio and television, more of this should be carried out using the social media and online news platforms. Through these channels, the counter advertising will have a more far-reaching impact
2. Public enlightenment programmes should also be carried out in Fulfude and Arabic instead of English and Hausa languages as this will make it to have a more reasonable impact. This is because most of the people used during crises understand little Hausa and have little or no understanding of English language.
3. Public enlightenment should be incorporated into religious sermons. This is because a lot of the illiterate residents of Niger State believe they destroy peoples' properties for spiritual reward
4. Delivering religious sermons using Public Address Systems (PAS) should be abolished. This is because it constitutes a terrible nuisance to people of other religious faiths. Besides, some of the contents of this sermon breed ethno-political violence
5. Aside from counter advertising, streamlining the process of order taking and delivery can be used as a marketing gimmick to attract new customers and keep old ones

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**APPENDIX I**  
**IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OVERRI**  
**FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM**  
**MANAGEMENT**  
*RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE*

## Ethno-political Crises Survival strategies and Hotel Patronage in Niger State

The objective of this study is to investigate the survival strategies adopted by hotel operators in Niger State to mitigate the impact of ethno-political crises on hotel patronage. The information obtained will be used strictly for academic purpose.

### SECTION ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick the

- 1) How old are you?
  - a) 18-30
  - b) 31-40
  - c) 41 -50
  - d) 51 and above
- 2) Kindly indicate your gender
  - a) Male
  - b) Female
- 3) Please what is your level of education?
  - a) National Diploma (ND)
  - b) Higher National Diploma (HND)
  - c) Degree
  - d) Masters and above
- 4) For how long have worked in this establishment?
  - a) 0 - 2 years
  - b) 2 - 5 years
  - c) 5 years and above
- 5) What is your current position?
  - a) General Manager
  - b) Reception/reservation manager
  - c) Food and Beverage Manager
  - d) Executive Housekeeper
- 6) How long have you been in this position?
  - a) 0 - 3 years
  - b) 3 - 6 years
  - c) 6 - 9 years
  - d) 9 - 12 years

### SECTION 2: GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO ETHNO-POLITICAL CRISES SURVIVAL STRATEGIES (ECSS) AND HOTEL PATRONAGE (HP)

Key: 4. Strongly agreed (SA)                      3. Agreed (A)                      2. Disagreed (D)                      1. Strongly disagreed (SD)

*Ethno-Political Crises Survival Strategies and Hotel Room Occupancy in Niger state*

Please tick (✓) in any the boxes according to your view point

1. Respondent's perspective on the extent of the effect of counter advertising on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

S/N		<b>4 (SA)</b>	<b>3 (A)</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>	<b>1 (SD)</b>
1	Counter advertising increases the rate of advance reservation	141	3	1	0
2	Counter advertising increases length of stay of registered guests	140	3	1	1
3	Counter advertising changes the mindset of tourists towards overnight stay	139	4	0	2
4	Counter advertising fosters the patronage of other hotel products	143	1	1	0
5	Counter advertising increases the number of chance guests	144	1	0	0

2. Respondent's perspective on the extent of the effect of personal communication with loyal guests on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

S/N		<b>4 (SA)</b>	<b>3 (A)</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>	<b>1 (SD)</b>
1	Personal communication changes guests' mind set about room reservation	141	4	0	0
2	Personal communication instills sense of safety in guests	136	4	1	4
3	Personal communication encourages length of stay of guests	138	4	2	1
4	Personal communication brings about word of mouth advertising	144	1	0	0
5	Personal communication encourages the patronage of indoor games facilities	145	0	0	0
6	Personal communication encourages the patronage of gift and souvenir shops	141	4	0	0

3. Respondent's perspective on the extent of the result of public enlightenment programme on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

S/N		<b>4 (SA)</b>	<b>3 (A)</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>	<b>1 (SD)</b>
1	Public enlightenment programme changes the mindset of religious fundamentalist about hotels as business ventures	141	4	0	0

2	Public enlightenment programme reduces the profiling of hotel guests and staff	139	2	2	2
3	Public enlightenment programme encourages the locals to reserve hotel rooms for their visitors	138	2	3	2
4	Public enlightenment programme reduces the incidences of attack on hotel guests	141	4	0	0
5	Public enlightenment programme changes the mindset of the locals towards people of other religious fates	142	3	0	0
5	Public enlightenment programme brings about liberality towards people of the different political parties	143	2	0	0

4. Respondent's perspective on the extent of the results of discounts to guests on hotel room occupancy in Niger State

S/N		<b>4 (SA)</b>	<b>3 (A)</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>	<b>1 (SD)</b>
1	Discounts to guests encourage higher patronage of the room division	145	0	0	0
2	Discounts to guests boost guests' confidence in advance reservation	144	1	0	0
3	Discounts to guests bring about good customer relationship	145	0	0	0
4	Discounts to guests reduce staff turnover	140	4	0	1
5	discounts to guests encourage customers to take up more expensive rooms	142	3	0	0