
Application of Marketing Mix Strategies in Hospitality Business: A Study of Hotels in Abuja, FCT- Nigeria

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Abstract: *The main objective of the study is to examine the application of marketing mix strategies in hospitality business with a particular focus on Hotels in Abuja. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in the study. The population of the study consists of managers/owners of the 30 best hotels in Abuja. Out of which 19 hotels were randomly selected as the sample of the study constituting 63.33 percent which was used for the analysis. The data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages mean and Simple Linear Correlation Analysis which reveals that, “the marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels are not significantly related to the aforementioned business–related factors in terms of type of ownership, capital, and the number of employees and years of existence”. The study further found that the level of customers' satisfaction is not significantly related to the level of the application of marketing mix strategies in terms of products or service offerings, pricing and promotional strategies. The study also reveals that maintaining consumer's loyalty by providing discounts, assisting customers, greeting customers, being friendly, and providing customers with clean and ventilated rooms was part of the necessary strategies for success. It was recommended that hotels managers should always give primary consideration to the three P's of the marketing mix when starting a new hotel business and should base their price adaptation strategies on the cost of the business to recover operational expenses and to ensure fair price and effective promotional campaigns which will result in sustainable competitive advantage.*

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Hospitality Business, Marketing Mix, Marketing Strategy, Nigeria*

1. Introduction

Marketing is a dynamic and challenging activity that requires an understanding of both its principles and strategies (Kotler, 1996). Marketing practitioners in all sectors of the Nigerian economy must possess the requisite skills and the practical experiences of implementing marketing ideas, processes and techniques in the market place so as to gain sustainable competitive advantage. For a marketer to achieve marketing objectives more effectively and efficiently, the right blend of the marketing mix strategies has to be made at all the time.

It is in realization of this that Hotel managers in the hospitality industry have been devising several marketing mix strategies in a bid to better their offerings. The hospitality industry provides services for people who are away from home regardless of whether it is for long or short periods of time. These services can vary according to the specific needs of both the person away from home and the organization operating those services (Baker et al, 2000). But in spite of these range of services the hospitality industry in Abuja have witness some business failures over time as a result of poor implementation of marketing mix strategies. As some new hotels are springing up, some fail while some survives; some others have been there successful, expanding and succeeding (Ofobruku & Obia. 2012). The need to study the application of marketing mix strategies in hospitality business is pertinent to this study, to underpin the marketing strategies that best fit the Abuja Hotels for effective performance. The study examines the application of marketing mix strategies in hospitality business in Abuja Hotels to help in determining the type of marketing mix strategies adopted by Hotels in wooing more customers and to establish whether there is any relationship between marketing mix strategies and other business-related factors, as well as to understanding the ownership structure and characteristics of the hotel managers.

The study is significant as hospitality industry is important to the development of many parts of the world. In some regions, income from it is one of the main sources of foreign exchange e.g. Fiji, the Caribbean and Hong Kong (Baker et al, 2000). The industry is important as it contributes to the growth of an economy by providing a lot of employment opportunities for the people, funding a large percentage of a country's Gross Domestic Product, thereby helping to raise the national income and by earning foreign currencies through the goods and services provided to foreign visitors, thus improving the balance of payments (Baker et al, 2000).

In Nigeria, the hospitality industry has made significant contributions to the growth of the Nigerian economy particularly in the 1980s and in 2006 (CBN, 2011). This confirms the significance of the study. Even though so many studies have been conducted, most of these studies focus on the contributions of hospitality business to the development of Nigeria economy while this study is unique as it seeks to examine the application of marketing mix strategies in hospitality business in Abuja with specific reference to only the three elements of the marketing mix: product, price and promotion.

The study is based on the following formulated hypotheses:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels and business related factors.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between the satisfaction level of customers and marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing Mix

Marketing mix is considered the most famous phrase used in marketing which has been described as the element of marketing tactics (Kotler, 1996). It is the term used to describe the combination of the four inputs that constitute the core of a company's marketing system i.e., Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Some authors have attempted to extend its usefulness by proposing a seven P's, such as people, process and physical evidence (Kotler, 1999). It is a set of controllable tactical marketing tools that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market. This are discussed below:

Product: Stanton (1964) defined product as a set of tangible and intangible attributes including packaging, colour test, price, manufacturer's prestige, retailer's prestige, as well as manufacturers' and retailer services which the buyer may accept as offering wants satisfaction. A product is anything offered for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Products can be physical objects, service, persons, organizations and ideas.

Price: pricing is a very important element in the marketing mix for it is the only one which produces revenue (Marsh, 1988). All the other parts of the marketing mix are cost-driven". Price is the term being used to describe money value of an item; it is the term expressed in any monetary medium whereby the exchange occurs. Kurtz and Clow (1998) suggested that, "consumers often use price as one of the inputs forming expectations when making purchase decisions", while Kotler (1996) argued that pricing decisions tremendously impact on customers and play a significant role in building an image for the company.

Place: place is an element of the marketing mix which deals with how manufacturers distribute products to the consumers. The movement of goods and services from the manufacturer to the consumer is known as distribution (Kotler & Keller (2006).

Promotion: promotion is one of the major forms of marketing communications, which include advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations (Kotler, 1996). These are therefore referred to as the promotional mix. Most scholars have used different words at different times to connote promotion. Kotler (1991) use the term "communication mix" rather than promotional mix, in the same context, while (Stanton, 1964) use the term "communications" to represent company-wide communications rather than just marketing communications.

2.2 Concept of Hospitality Business

The terms Hospitality business was derived from the latin word HOSPE, meaning "host or guest and hospitium", which imply guest chamber, inn or quarter (Chon and Sparrow, 2000). Hospitality business is perceive or seen as the commercial activities which offer consumers accommodation, means and drinks when out from home while promoting a welcome, warm friendly experience that benefits travelers (George, 2001). Rundell (2007) defined hospitality as friendly and generous behavior towards visitors and

guests, intended to make them feel welcomed: food, drink, room and entertainment given to customers by a company or organization.

2.3 The Hotel Marketing Mix

Defining a proper marketing mix for hotel industry is crucial for the success of hotels marketing efforts. A marketing mix is used to indicate the several marketing variables used by the sales team to target specific guests or target market segments (E.g.: Corporate, Transient, Groups, Conference, Leisure etc.). Marketing mix is normally prepared by the Director of sales and marketing / Sales managers. The hotel should have the right facilities / services, define good promotional strategies (both online and offline) and finally with the right pricing. Kotler (1996) identifies the hotel marketing mix as (1) service/facilities; (2) place and distribution; (3) promotions and communications; (4) room rate or pricing.

Service / Facilities: This is considered as the first because without this hotel marketing team will have nothing to deliver to the potential guest/ customers. Hotel industry Offer products like: Guest rooms, Food and beverage, Banqueting rooms, Conference facilities, Recreational facilities, Health and wellness facilities, Executive lounge, Express check-in checkout services, as well as Travel desk and Business centre and Parking facilities etc. Hotels generally cater to different market segments and each of these market segments has different requirements.

Place and Distribution: This refers to the accessibility of the products to consumers. When comparing to other products normally hotels products doesn't travel to customers but the customers come to the product. Place or Location of the hotel e.g. choices like in city, outskirts of city, hill station or a chain of hotels with presence in multiple locations. Hotel uses either direct or indirect distribution methods to reach out to its potential customers; it could be through the direct methods (sales through the hotel sales team, personal telephone calls, online pay per click or banner advertisements, printed and electronic media advertisements and hotel website booking system) or the indirect methods (travel agents, independent Travel agents, event planners, travel agents, online travel portals and independent hotel representative.

Promotions and communications: The director of Sales & Marketing should work out the most effective promotion and communication mix for the hotel. Promotion is the way hotels communicate to target customers. It could be through: Brochures, Television commercials, Hotel Websites, Twitter Channel, Facebook Page, Google + Page, Hotel pens & pencils, Scratch pads with hotel logo and Billboards etc.

Room Rate or Pricing: Defining the correct pricing strategy is one of the most important aspects of the marketing mix. If the hotel products like Guest rooms, Food and beverage menu etc. are not priced competitively then the potential guest may reject the use of hotel services. In this very competitive market guests are strongly influenced by the pricing and packages.

2.4 Marketing Mix Strategies for Hospitality Business

The marketing mix strategies for hospitality business are viewed as a cover up of support plan to provide the customer or visitor with satisfaction (Johnson & Weinstein, 2004). There are various types of strategies that come into play such as competitive strategy, market and resource based strategy, quality and innovation, growth strategies. It is now necessary that one of these have to be used at a time but generally combinations of these are used in most hospitality businesses to achieve optimum results. The internal marketing mix can be controlled by the firm whereas the external environment cannot be. Every industry tries to develop marketing strategies utilizing marketing mix that will establish sustainable competitive advantages leading to long term growth and profitability (Pagaso, Dela & Manuel, 2000). Kotler (2006) identifies marketing mix strategies for the hospitality business to include; product, price, place and promotion.

2.5 Concepts of Strategy

The term 'strategy' is a plan aimed at achieving a particular purpose. It is used in many military formations across the world for planning and acquisition of the right skills to gain advantage in a war or other military situations. In marketing, it is widely used to describe a seemingly endless number of marketing activities. Today, everything in marketing seems to be strategy. There are product strategy, strategic pricing, strategic

promotion, strategic distribution and strategic market penetration. In recent years, the appellation is appended to nearly every marketing action in order to make the ordinary sound modern and competitively inspired (Schnaars, 1998). Wright and Pringle (1992) define strategy as Top management's plans to attain outcomes consistent with the organization's missions and goals.

2.6 Strategic Marketing

The concept of strategic marketing is used in various ways. It is a deeply customer-oriented concept focusing on the top management's long-term vision for competitive advantage through product innovation, other functions being fully subservient to this process (Vassinen, 2006). Thompson (1995) defined strategic marketing precisely as: "A unified, comprehensive and integrated marketing plan designed to assure that the basic objective of the enterprise are achieved". The three adjectives that Thompson used to define a plan made the definition quite adequate. 'Unified' means that the plan joins all the parts of an enterprise together; 'comprehensive' means it covers all the major aspects of the enterprise, and 'integrated' means that all parts of the marketing plans are compatible with each other for effective performance. Through the use of marketing strategy an organization can concentrate its limited resources in the best manner possible so as to increase the profits and be at an advantage as compared to the other organizations. The main goal behind every marketing strategy should be customer satisfaction.

2.7 Theoretical Bases of the study

The study is anchored based on the theories of Pagaso, Dela and Manuel (2000); and Kotler (2006) who opined that every industry must try to develop marketing strategies utilizing marketing mix that will establish sustainable competitive advantages leading to long term growth and profitability.

3. Research Methodology

The study focused only on the three elements of the marketing mix: product, price and promotion as they are the most important elements with more significant relationship with customers as compared to place (Lao, 2001). The population of the study includes managers/owners of the 30 best performing hotels in Abuja (Ahmad, 2014). Out of which 19 hotels were randomly selected as the sample of the study constituting 63.33% of the original population (Table 1). A total of 189 respondents (managers/owners and customers) responded to the questionnaires. Only the customers who checked-into the hotels during the period of data collection exercise were targeted and only the hotels that provide both sleeping accommodation and catering services and beverages are among the respondents for the study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to examine the application of marketing mix strategies in hospitality business as perceived by managers and customers of Abuja hotels. The questionnaire was utilized to elicit information from the customers as to how marketing mix strategies are applied by the hotels owners/managers. Items in the questionnaire were derived from different marketing functions expressed in general aspects that could be interpreted by the customers. To gather the necessary information, permission was requested from managers/owners of Abuja hotels. The questionnaire checklist was used as the main instrument for data gathering. It consists of items in marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels as it relates their product strategy, pricing strategy and promotional strategy. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researchers. The data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages mean and Simple Linear Correlation Analysis to determine the relationship between the marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels and business related factors and to assess the level of the implementation of marketing mix strategies on customer's satisfaction.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the distribution of responses in line with the objective of the study. The table shows that out of the 208 number of respondents, 189 or 90.87% are hotel customers who were targeted at the time they check-into the hotels at different periods while, 19 or 9.13% are managers or owners of the targeted hotels.

Table 1: Distribution of Responses

Hotels	Owner/Manager	Customer	Total	Percent
Transcorp Hilton Abuja	01	15	16	7.69
Abuja Sheraton Hotel & Towers	01	08	09	4.33
Bolingo Hotel & Towers Abuja	01	05	06	2.88
Denis Hotel	01	12	13	6.25
Grand Towers Hotel	01	15	16	7.69
Sandralia Hotel	01	10	11	5.29
Reiz Continental Hotel	01	08	09	4.33
3J's Hotel	01	12	13	6.25
Hotel De Bentley	01	08	09	4.33
Petrus Hotels Royale	01	14	15	7.21
Tranquil Mews	01	10	11	5.29
Ajuji Greenwich Hotel	01	10	11	5.29
Crystal Palace Hotel	01	10	11	5.29
Savannah Suites Hotel	01	12	13	6.25
The Nordic Villa	01	10	11	5.29
Valencia Hotels	01	08	09	4.33
Protea Hotel Abuja	01	10	11	5.29
Chelsea Hotel	01	07	08	3.85
Total	19	189	208	
Frequency (%)	9.13	90.87		100%

Source: Computed by the Author

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents. Only the characteristics of respondents (educational qualification & gender) that are relevant to the study were considered for the analysis. From the table, 11 or 57.89% of the managers/owners who responded are university or polytechnic graduates while, 6 or 31.58% possessed masters or PhD degrees in related fields with school leavers as the least with only 2 which accounted for 10.52%. Female hotel managers/owners (10 or 52.63%) were more than the males who are 9 or 47.37%. The implication of these findings to the study is that most of the managers are graduates with requisite qualifications to ensure the effective application of marketing mix strategies which will help in gaining competitive advantage. The study also, shows that the females have dominance over the males as managers or owners of hotels in Abuja.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Category	Frequency	Percent
	Masters/PhD	06	31.58
	University/Polytechnic	11	57.89
	Graduates		
	Secondary School leavers	02	10.52
Total		19	100
Gender	Male	09	47.37
	Female	10	52.63
Total		19	100

Source: Computed by the Author

As shown in Table 3, out of nineteen hotels in Abuja, 11 (57.89%) are sole proprietorship, 8 (42.11%) are corporation and none are under partnership or any other form of ownership. Managers of the hotels prefer to be sole proprietor because this type of organizational set-up is the easiest to manage. A sole proprietorship requires small organizational expense and no formal requirements for publicity. Because of its small capitalization it is involved in a minimum legal restriction. The disadvantage is that, the owner has unlimited liability.

Table 3: Profile of Hotels

	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Type of Ownership	Sole Proprietorship	11	57.89
	Partnership	-	-
	Corporation	08	42.11
Number of Employees	15 and above	08	42.11
	10-14	05	26.31
	9-13	06	31.58
Years of Working Experience	2 to less than 5 years	02	10.53
	5 to less than 8 years	08	42.11
	8 to less than 11 years	03	15.79
	11 to less than 14 years	03	15.79
	More than 14 years	03	15.79

Source: Computed by the Author

Most of the hotels (8 or 42.11%) had 15 or more employees. There are 6 (31.58%) that have 9 to 13 employees, and 5 (26.31%) with 10 to 14 employees. The findings imply that the number of employees was largely dependent on the organizational set-up of the hotels and the services offered. Educational qualification is an important factor in the selection and hiring of employees. Only those who are very loyal stay longer in the establishment where they work. Likewise, before an employee can be employed she or he must undergo training in order to know the mechanism of the hotel operations. In terms of years of existence, 8 (42.11%) existed for 5 to 8 years, 3 (15.79%) existed for 11 to 14 years, and another 3 (15.79%) for more than 14 years. Two (2 or 11.53%) existed for less than 2 years. This shows that most hotels have already established their names in the Abuja hospitality business, gained stability in the environment.

Table 4: Distribution of Hotels based on Services offered

	Service Category	Frequency	Percent
Products or Services Offered	Sleeping Accommodation	19	100%
	Food & Beverages	19	100%
	Maid Service	03	15.79
	Satellite Viewing	09	47.37
	Recreational Facilities	07	36.84
	Laundry Services	10	52.63
	Conference Hall (Seminar, Wedding etc)	09	47.37
	Cab Hiring	01	5.26
Number Available Rooms	10 to 20 rooms	07	36.84
	21-30 rooms	04	21.05
	More than 30 rooms	08	42.11
Size of Rooms	Single	10	52.63
	Double	16	84.21
	Standard-Double	15	78.95
	Presidential VIP	01	5.26
Type of Service	Self-service	02	10.53
	Room Service Attendant	07	36.84
	Receptionist	11	57.89

Source: Computed by the Author

Table 4 shows the distribution of hotels in terms of product or services offered. It can be seen from the data that all hotels in Abuja offered sleeping accommodation (19 or 100%), provided food and beverages (19 or 100%), offered laundry services 10 (52.63%), offered satellite viewing 9 (47.37%), another 9 (47.37%) offered conference hall services for seminar, wedding reception etc, and 7 (36.84%) offered recreational facilities while one (5.26%) offered cab hire. The findings imply that all the hotels offered both sleeping accommodation and food and beverages. Providing food and beverages to customers would eventually

increase not only the total sales of the business but it could also bring a higher yield. It can be seen from the data that most of the hotels have more than 30 rooms (8 or 42.11%), 7 (36.84%) that have 10 to 20 rooms, and 4 (21.05%) that have 21 to 30 rooms. So, in order to meet the demand of the visitors these businesses would need to improve and expand their operation and some also need to increase the number of rooms for future reservations.

It can be seen from Table 4 that most of the hotels have double size rooms (16 or 84.21%), 15 (78.95%) have standard double, 10 (52.63%) have single size rooms, and only one (1 or 5.26%) that has a Presidential VIP room. Most of the hotels prefer to have a double size rooms because it is more flexible and it allows ample space for individuals to utilize the rooms. Likewise this type of room is more preferred for use by the customers. The results reveal that both room service attendant (07 or 36.84) and receptionist (11 or 57.89%) are the most popular ways of serving customers among the investigated hotels, and 2 (10.53%) at times, resort to self-service.

The level of the application of marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels in terms of products or services offered is presented in Table 5. The results show that Abuja hotels have a “Very High” (X=4.30) level of marketing mix strategies as relates to their product offerings. They consider the sanitation and cleanliness of the hotels surroundings (X=4.79), coupled with promptness and courteous service (X=4.61), adequacy of parking lots (X=4.73), food and beverages (X=4.21), good and proper ventilation (X=4.63), customer information service (X=4.27), and decoration of rooms (X=4.27). Oftentimes they pay attention to attractive dining facilities (X=3.84). These are the main factors to be considered in the operation of hospitality business in order to attract and retain loyal customers. Sometimes they have recreational facilities (X=3.15). According to the owners/managers, sanitation and cleanliness of the Abuja hotels must always be monitored to ensure and protect the health and safety not only for their customers but also for the benefit of their employees as well.

Table 5: Marketing Mix Strategies of Abuja Hotels and their Service Offerings

Products or Services Offered	Mean	Decision
Sanitation and Cleanliness of the Hotels Surroundings	4.79	Regular
Promptness and Courteous Service	4.61	Regular
Adequate Parking Lots	4.73	Regular
Food and Beverages	4.21	Regular
Good and proper ventilation	4.63	Regular
Recreational Facilities	3.15	Sometimes
Customer Information Service	4.47	Regular
Decoration of Rooms	4.27	Regular
Attractive Dining Facilities	3.84	Oftentimes
Overall	4.30	Very High

Norms Marketing Practices		On Customers' Satisfaction	
4.21 – 5.00	Regular	Very High	Strongly Satisfied
3.41 – 4.20	Oftentimes	High	Very Satisfied
2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes	Fair	Satisfied
1.81 – 2.60	Rarely	Low	Moderately Satisfied
1.00 – 1.80	Never	Very Low	Dissatisfied

Source: Computed by the Author

Table 6 displays the level of implementation of marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels in terms of pricing. It can be seen from the results that there is a “High” (X=3.41) level of marketing practices of the hotels and resorts in terms of pricing. “Oftentimes” they use cost/ expense (X=3.82) and discount (X=3.88) as their basis in pricing their products. Sometimes they use demand (X=3.88) as their basis in pricing their products. Sometimes they use demand (X=3.00) and the price of the competitors (X=2.62) as their basis. They rarely use psychological factors (X=2.47) as a basis in pricing. According to some owners/managers they oftentimes use cost and discount in pricing in order to cover all the necessary expenses needed in the operation of the business and to retain customer loyalty.

Table 6: Marketing Mix Strategies of Abuja Hotels and their Pricing Dimension

	Pricing	Mean	Decision
Adopted Pricing Strategies	Based on cost/expense of product	3.82	Oftentimes
	Based on demand	3.00	Sometimes
	Psychological	2.47	Rarely
	Discount	3.88	Oftentimes
	Based on the price of competitors	2.62	Sometimes
Internal factors affecting pricing decision	Profit	4.06	Oftentimes
	Available offer	3.88	Oftentimes
	Cost	3.44	Oftentimes
	Business Structure	3.94	Oftentimes
External factors affecting pricing decision	The market and demand	3.53	Oftentimes
	Competitors price and offer	3.25	Sometimes
	Environmental factors such as political, environmental, demographic, economic condition etc.	3.00	Sometimes
Overall		3.41	High

Source: Computed by the Author

The results show that “Oftentimes” they consider available offers (X=3.88), business structure (X=3.94), profit (X=4.06) and cost (X=3.44) as internal factors in pricing. Also, oftentimes, they consider the market and demand (X=3.53) as external factors in pricing decision. But sometimes they consider the competitors' price and offer (X=3.25) and environmental factors such as political, environmental, demographic, economic condition, etc. (X=3.00) as external factors in considerations in their price adaptation strategy. Since price is the only element among the P's of marketing mix that generates income, owner/managers of hotels always see to it that prices are fair and affordable in order to retain customers.

Table 7: Marketing Mix Strategies of Abuja Hotels and their Promotional Pattern

	Promotion	Mean	Decision
Factors considered in maintaining loyal Customers and achieving deeper market penetration	Giving customers' discount	4.00	Oftentimes
	Providing additional amenities such as maid service, radio and television plus cable TV, Telephone/intercom	3.94	Oftentimes
	Providing additional assistance	4.05	Oftentimes
	Greeting customers and being friendly	4.65	Regular
	Providing customers with clean and ventilated rooms	4.50	Regular
	Giving souvenirs and gifts	2.82	Sometimes
Promotion Practices	Personal selling	3.11	Sometimes
	Print media	3.79	Oftentimes
	Sales promotion (e.g. giving free gifts)	3.36	Sometimes
Ways of advertising the hotels	Local radio	3.18	Sometimes
	Local newspaper	2.35	Rarely
	Brochures distributed	3.22	Sometimes
	Billboards	3.39	Sometimes
Observations on the importance of promotion to the Hotels	The hotels have sufficient advertising budget	3.47	Oftentimes
	The hotels have a strong promotional programmes	3.71	Oftentimes
	Promotion affects the volume of sales	3.65	Oftentimes
	The advertising campaigns reaches the target audience effectively	3.56	Oftentimes
Overall		3.53	High

Source: Computed by the Author

Table 7 shows the marketing mix strategies of Abuja Hotels and their promotional pattern. It can be seen from the results that there is a “High” (X=3.53) level of the application of marketing mix strategies in terms of promotion. They “always” consider greeting customers and being friendly (X=4.65) and providing customers with clean and ventilated rooms (X=4.50). “Oftentimes” they consider giving customers discounts (X=4.00), providing additional amenities such as maid service, radio plus cable TV, telephone/intercom (X=3.94), and providing additional assistance and information (X=4.05). These are the most common factors to be considered in order to maintain customers loyalty achieve deeper market penetration, considering that customers are the ones who give income to the business in return for services. Sometimes, hotels give souvenirs and gifts to customers (X=2.88). “Oftentimes” the management of the hotels consider print media (X=3.79) as the commonest media for public relations activities that will help build image and credibility for the hotels.

Sometimes they use personal selling (X=3.11) and sales promotion (X=3.36) as a promotional practice. According to some owners/managers they oftentimes use print media as their promotion practice because it leads to a higher level of success for the operation. At the same time it could reach a specific population or targeted group of customers. “Sometimes” they consider local radio (X=3.18), brochures distributed through customers (X=3.22) and billboards (X=3.39). The hotels “rarely” used local newspaper (X=2.35) as a way to advertise their business. Owners/managers expressed that they give much thought and time to promotions since they are very important for their organization's success. The reason why they spend time to craft an innovative promotional strategy is to capture the attention of existing and prospective customers. However, these managers and owners understand that being approachable and friendly is the best way of promoting the hospitality business.

Table 8 presents the correlation coefficients of the level of application of marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels. The data reveals that all of the four business-related factors, namely type of ownership (r = -0.196), capital (r = -0.206), number of employees (r = -0.027), and years of existence (r = -0.059) failed to surpass the r required at .05 probability level which is 0.4438. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels and the aforementioned business related factors cannot be rejected. This means that the level of the application of marketing mix strategies is not significantly related to the type of ownership, capital, number of employees, and the years of existence. In other words, the level of the application of marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels are not influenced by the type of ownership, capital, number of employees, and the years of existence.

Table 8: Correlation coefficients of the level of application of marketing mix strategies

Business Related Factors	Marketing Mix Strategies			
	Product Offering	Pricing	Promotion	Overall
Type of ownership	0.183	0.095	0.092	-.196
Capital: Initial	0.032	-.211	-.440	-.055
Current	0.020	-.001	-.371	0.151
Number of Employees	0.074	-0.82	.153	-.027
Years of Working Experience	0.008	0.280	-.245	-.059

r – required at .05=.4438

Table 9 presents the level of customers' satisfaction arising from the marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels in terms of products or services offered, pricing and promotion. The data reveals that customers are “Very Satisfied” (X=3.44) with the product offering, pricing and promotion of the hotels business. It can be seen from the data that customers are “Very Satisfied” (X=3.76) with the products or services offered by the hotels. Likewise they are very satisfied with the variety of products (X=3.52), quality of service (X=3.95), quality of food and beverages (X=3.70), quality of recreational facilities (X=3.58), arrangement and presentation of rooms (X=3.96), ventilation (X=3.95) and lighting (X=3.69). This has been observed by the researchers through the customers' demeanor in the hotels. It can be seen from the data that customers are “Very Satisfied” (X=3.52) with the pricing of hotels. In particular, they are very satisfied with the prices of rooms (X=3.56), and furthermore, the prices vary according to target market

($X=3.49$). The prices vary according to quality ($X=3.67$), the prices are based on the prevailing market conditions ($X=3.46$), the prices are based on supply and demand ($X=3.49$), and are based on the acceptance of price ($X=3.50$). According to operators, prices must be fair to competition and reasonably affordable in order to maintain the operation of the business and to retain customers' loyalty at the same time. Likewise, prices should be fair to the return on investment, as expressed by the owners/managers. The customers are "Satisfied" with the promotion of the hotels operation ($X=3.04$). Moreover, they are "satisfied" with the use of radio advertising ($X=3.06$), the use of discounts as a promotion strategy ($X=3.40$), the use of the local newspaper ($x=2.88$), the use of billboard(s) ($X=3.10$), and the use of brochures given to customers ($X=3.36$). They are moderately satisfied with giving souvenirs ($X=2.47$). Customers are satisfied with the promotions because it helps them to build image and credibility and becomes aware of the services offered by these establishments.

Table 9: Customers Satisfaction and Marketing Mix Strategies

Customers Satisfaction Variables		Mean	Decision
On product offering	Variety of products	3.52	Very Satisfied
	Quality of Service	3.95	Very Satisfied
	Quality of food and beverages	3.70	Very Satisfied
	Quality of recreational facilities	3.58	Very Satisfied
	Arrangement and presentation of rooms/cottages	3.96	Very Satisfied
	Ventilation	3.95	Very Satisfied
	Lighting	3.65	Very Satisfied
Overall		3.76	Very Satisfied
Pricing	Prices of rooms/cottages	3.59	Very Satisfied
	The prices vary according to quality	3.67	Very Satisfied
	The prices vary according to target market	3.46	Very Satisfied
	The prices are based on the prevailing market Condition	3.46	Very Satisfied
	The prices are based on supply and demand	3.49	Very Satisfied
	Acceptance of price	3.50	Very Satisfied
Overall		3.52	Very Satisfied
Promotion	The use of radio advertising	3.06	Satisfied
	The use of discounts as a promotion strategy	3.40	Satisfied
	The use of local newspaper	2.88	Satisfied
	The use of billboard(s)	3.10	Satisfied
	The use of brochures given to customers	3.36	Satisfied
	Giving souvenirs	2.47	Satisfied
Overall		3.04	Satisfied
General Mean		3.44	Very Satisfied

Source: Computed by the Author

Table 10 shows the correlation coefficient between the level of customers' satisfaction and the marketing mix strategies of Abuja of Hotels. It can be seen from the data that customers' satisfaction in terms of product offering ($r = .025$), pricing ($r = -.301$), and promotion ($r = .209$) failed to surpass the r required at .05 probability level which is .4438. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the satisfaction level of customers and marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels cannot be rejected. This means that the level of customers' satisfaction is not significantly related to the marketing practices of hotels in terms of product offering, pricing and promotion. The level of customers' satisfaction is not influenced by such practices.

Table 10: Correlation Coefficients-Customers' Satisfaction and Marketing Mix Strategies

Customers Satisfaction	Marketing Mix Strategies			
	Product	Pricing	Promotion	Overall
Product offering	0.381	0.056	0.114	0.025
Pricing	0.231	-.158	-.048	-.301
Promotion	0.388	0.238	0.300	.209

r – required at .05=.4438

Table 11 presents the common problems, issues, and comments of the owners/managers and customers with regards to the operation of the hotels. One of the common problems encountered by the hotel owners/managers is transportation. Transportation is a special trip that has a huge cost to the business (5.26%), and not having a service vehicle is another problem (5.26%). It can be seen from the data that the most common problem for customers is that the facilities must be repaired (4 or 21.05%), 2 (10.53%) additional reservation of rooms, another 2 (10.53%) that more briefing and training of hotel operations to improve the business, 2 (10.53%) suggest to provide shuttle bus or cab hire, 2 (10.53%) suggest to provide shuttle bus, one (5.26%) states that the parking lot is too small, one (5.26%) mentioned poor restaurant service, and one (5.26%) said the dining facilities were not pleasing to the eyes. Customers are very interested in the quality of the services along with the quality of their comfort in the rooms.

Table 11: Problems, Issues, Comments for Abuja Hotels

Problems, Issues and Comments		Frequency	Percent
<i>Owners/managers</i>	Transportation is always a special trip which cost so much to the operation	1	5.26
	No service vehicles	1	5.26
<i>Customers</i>	Additional reservation of rooms	2	10.53
	More briefing and training of hotel operation	2	10.53
	Facilities should be repaired	4	21.05
	Additional employees	1	5.26
	Not enough promotion	1	5.26

Source: Computed by the Author

4.1 Major Findings

Since the main objective of this study was to examine the application of marketing mix strategies of Abuja Hotels in terms of product offering, pricing and promotion, the study found that the marketing mix strategies of Abuja hotels are not significantly related to the aforementioned business-related factors in terms of type of ownership, capital, and the number of employees and years of existence. Furthermore, the finding reveals that the level of customers' satisfaction is not significantly related to the level of the application of marketing mix strategies in terms of product offering, pricing and promotion. Among the more prominent findings of the study is the fact that Abuja hotels are largely sole proprietorship in nature. Almost all managers are university or Polytechnic graduates, and the majority of them are female. A great majority offered more than thirty rooms that are mostly double size in nature, and the most common forms of service used are room service attendant and receptionist. The hotels consider foremost the sanitation and cleanliness of their surroundings. In terms of pricing, they considered maintaining consumer's loyalty by providing discounts, having additional assistance, greeting customers, being friendly, and providing customers with clean and ventilated rooms. While the most common promotional practices of the Abuja hotels is the print media which the use for public relations activities to help build image and credibility for the hotels, other forms such as local radio, brochures distribution and bill-boards are the most common ways of advertising.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Customer satisfaction in hospitality business is very much prejudiced by the way in which the service is delivered. It is a very important fraction of hotels management and can be done successfully with effective marketing mix decisions, if one keeps in mind the important of the application of marketing mix strategies in the business. The evaluation of the marketing efforts could help in shaping which strategies are the most important to use in satisfying the hotel guests more effectively and efficiently. This in a great way will contribute towards improving the efficiency of the strategies that are being used by recognizing the present dissimilarities between real outcomes and anticipated performance. All this in turn will surely help determine the most probable and expected causes for success or failure of any hospitality business. The implication of this to the study is that hotels that apply the right marketing mix strategies are likely going to perform better than those without effective marketing mix strategies as those with good application of marketing mix strategies will gain competitive advantage in the environment while those without effective mix strategies will fail in competition. Since the study covers only 3 elements of the marketing mix (product, price and promotion), other future researchers are enjoined to investigate the impact of the application on the other elements such as place, people, process and physical evidence.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made to help improve hospitality business:

1. Hotel Managers should always give primary consideration to the three P's of the marketing mix when starting a new hotel business as it is important to always determine the needs and wants of customers by satisfying them effectively.
2. Managers should base their price adaptation strategies on the cost of the hospitality business to recover the operational expenses; to ensure that the price is fair and reasonably affordable for the customers.
3. Promotional campaigns such as Advertising, Personal Selling, Sales promotion and Publicity should be conducted from time-to-time to help create awareness and boost company image and credibility.
4. Provision of more and improved recreational facilities, such as sporting events, disco theatre, swimming pool etc. should be provided for the relaxation of hotel guests at all the time.
5. Hotel managers should ensure improvement of customer satisfaction levels by providing variety of products or services of good quality combined with courteous and prompt services at reasonable prices.
6. Capacities of hotel managers should be enhanced through adequate training programmes such as seminars and workshops to help acquire those innovative mechanisms of hotel operation the will result in gaining competitive advantage.
7. Federal Government should attract more investors to venture into hospitality business by giving incentives like tax holidays in order to encourage the development of hospitality business in Nigeria which helps in the creation of job opportunities and economic development.

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