

# Hospitality Business Vs Environmental Sustainability: A Study of Soarak Hotel and Casino Lagos

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**Abstract:** *The rapid growth of Hospitality businesses in Nigeria is increasing at an alarming rate. It is sad to note that majority of these investors have little or no knowledge of the impact that their investment has on the environment. This is because most investors only carry out feasibility study on the profit forfeiting the sustainability of the business which depends on the environment. Today hospitality investors in Nigeria have refused to answer this question “are the activities of hospitality business environmental friendly? At this point it is pertinent to note that the sustainability of any hospitality business anchors largely on environmental sustainability. In other words, all hospitality business needs the environment to thrive. Therefore, in view of the above, this paper critically diagnosed the activities of Soarak hotel and casino Lagos towards environmental sustainability. Its primary objective is to identify the impact of soarak hotel on its immediate surroundings. This research made extensive use of interview and questionnaire as instruments of data collection. In conclusion, the paper recommends sustainable measures to mitigate the activities of hospitality business on the environment.*

**Keywords:** Hospitality business, tourism, Impact, environmental sustainability

## 1. Introduction

Hospitality is the very essence of tourism, involving the consumption of food, drink and accommodation in an environment away from home base...historically, hospitality was not necessarily a commercial endeavor, as you might host someone with the expectation they might host you at a later stage...in modern-day society hospitality has become a commercialized experience, where the guest pays for the services/goods they consume via bill [1]. The commercialization of this industry has its root in the centuries old tradition of inn-keeping. The focus of hospitality is welfare. It is an aspect of tourism that looks out for the wellbeing of tourists. Tourist comfort been the essence of hospitality is offered by hotels. In this vein, [2] pointed out that hotel provision falls within the general context of hospitality, an aspect of human activity which has important social dimensions, as well as meeting physiological requirements of shelter and body comfort. Therefore, the hospitality businesses include the following hotels; restaurants; pubs, bars and nightclubs; contract food service providers; membership clubs; events etc. Overtime this sector of tourism has recorded a considerable growth it recorded between 1990 and 1998 'a growth of over 25% in the number of units [2] and a total of '29.4 million bed spaces in hotels and similar establishments worldwide in 1997.

Therefore, the hospitality industry is one of the largest and the fastest growing in the world. An interesting aspect of this industry is that it is made up of so many professions, thereby accommodating people of diverse background coming into the industry to invest. As diverse as the hospitality industry is, there are some powerful and common dynamics, which include delivery of service and guest impression in them. Because in the Hospitality Industry, we are selling an intangible and perishable product, Guest's satisfaction is our goal. To satisfy the guest, the service provider, usually exploit all possible means to ensure that their guests get value for their money. In achieving this, especially in Nigeria

a lot of machineries are put into operation. Such as the use electric power plants that consumes diesel which produces smoke that cause air pollution and at times noise pollution. From the foregoing, one would agree with me that of a truth the issue of maintaining a sustainable environment is vital for the prosperity of the hospitality industry. In view of the above, it is the objective of this paper to address the impact of hospitality business on the environment and to highlight qualitative measures to mitigate the impact in other to ensure a friendly or sustainable business environment.

## 2. Research Methodology

This research uses a case study of Soarak Hotel and Casino to analyze the impact of hospitality activities on host communities. It examined the interaction between the Hotel visitors and the local residents. The study area (Ebutte-Meta and the case study (Soarak hotel and Casino) was selected because of the high population density of the area and the report of cases of antisocial activities within the hotel. The study population consisted of: (1) local people living in Ebutte Meta in Lagos Metropolis and (2) the tourists or hotel visitors.

Data collection was by a combination of questionnaires, interviews and field observation. Questionnaires and field interviews were administered to the hotel staff and residents. The research made extensive use of in-depth interviews in order to gain insight into the negative impact of the Hotel activities on the host community. The interviews were conducted in the Hotel and also in the homes of the residents. Before the use audio-tape to record information from the interviews permission were sought from the informants with the assurance confidence. Three types of questionnaires were administered – (1) for local residents, (2) for the Hotel visitors /tourists and (3) for the hotel staff. Each questionnaire basically centre's on the impact of the hotel activities on the local residents and the influence or interactions between local residents and tourists. In addition,

other existing transcripts were annotated with new observations related to the trajectories of tourism.

### 3. Environmental Sustainability

Sustainability is a critical business issue that is becoming a mandatory requirement for the hospitality business especially the hotelier. Until quite recently, the hotel industry has been rather oblivious of the extent of environmental damage caused by its services and operations. The last two decades, however, have brought about an increased environmental awareness among the general public [3]. Thus, the notion of sustainability came into the lime light out of great concern for the extensive usage of natural resources within the environment without replenishment. Man's survival hangs on the environment which leads to an irreparable destruction of environmental resources. Consequently this era of industrial technology has so negatively retouched the environment with its resultant effect on depletion of natural resources and eventual barrenness of the natural environment. Therefore, the concepts of sustainability arise from the fact that resources must be maintained in order to avoid destruction or to minimize negative effects on the environment. It recognises the need for fairness between local individuals and groups, and between hosts and guests [4]. But the lackadaisical attitude and ignorance of many investors and employee in the hospitality industry has resulted in a lot of problems in the society. This is hospitality investors do not perceive the activities of hospitality business a threat to the environment. In view of the above [5] pointed out that pollution, waste, greenhouse gases and environmental hazards do not necessarily spring to mind when considering the hospitality and tourism industries. Environmental degradation is more readily associated with industries like manufacturing, energy production, steel industry, oil production or the chemical industry. He further noted that hotels need to reduce their impact on the environment as they count amongst the greatest polluters and resource consumers within the service industries. this implies that actually hospitality operations can impact on the environment during building construction, manufacture and use of fixtures and fittings, cultivation of food, as well as when using energy and water or producing waste [5]. In spite of all the challenges of environmental resources as a result of hospitality businesses, the vital aspect of it all is to prolong and maintain the existing resources without destroying the environment and the resources for the benefit of the future generation [6].

The term 'sustainability' is used from the early 1970s when attention was first drawn to concerns about the environment and overexploitation. The word sustainability focuses on environmental practices: conserving limited resources, reducing pollution, and preserving natural ecosystems. In [7] opinion, sustainability is about working in a way that neutralizes an organizations impact on the environment. Also sustainability is about not sacrificing the future for our needs today. Sustainable development is a holistic concept based on a simple principle. As outlined in the 1987 Brundtland report, the concept involves "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In 1996, Agenda 21 for the travel and tourism industry made hospitality providers aware of the need to enhance

sustainability development. It highlighted the fact that the tourism industry relies on the quality of the environment for its survival, and so, need to play a role in environmental preservation [8].

This implies that an industry with environment dependent activity like the hospitality business must be sensitive to environmental resources ensuring its preservation against depletion. In this vein, The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as "tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. Thus it is clear that the environment is an invaluable asset to Tourism therefore its sustainability is the focus of its activity including the hospitality outlet. Hence, a sustainable hospitality operation can be defined as a hospitality operation that manages its resources in such a way that economic, social and environmental benefits are maximized in order to meet the need of the present generation while protecting and enhancing opportunities for future generations. Therefore, sustainable hospitality operations... aim at reducing their impact on the environment and society [2].

### 4. The Case Study

SAORAK Hotel and Casino is a hospitality outlet located in Ebutte Meta, Lagos Nigeria. The Hotel provides accommodation services to the residents and non-residents in Lagos, restaurant and catering services, dispensing of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, night clubs and casino. These major services attract lots of people coming to patronize the hotel. In one way or the other, the hotel and its customer's activities invariably have impacts on the immediate environments. These impacts are the result of the interaction between tourist and their activities on the environment. In other words it encompasses both positive and negative impacts on the host environment which is at the receiving end. These positive impacts should include results such as improvements in local economic conditions, social and cultural understanding and protected environmental resources [9]. On the other hand tourism can increase tension, hostility, and suspicion. The idea that tourism is a vital force for peace is an exaggerated fact because in reality tourism affects every people and environment it touches. In that vein there is little evidence that tourism is drawing the world together looking at impact of Soarak Hotel and Casino activities in Lagos. The hotel does not have adequate parking space as a result of this the hotel's services are constantly inconveniencing the residents by parking car in residential homes. Also the location of a Casino in the area has continuously lured robbers to the area since the act of gambling is involved. This is evident in car theft in which is menacing the area. Equally, the patronage of commercial sex workers encourages the act of prostitution which is against the norms of the local resident. Finally, the area which is known for quiet lifestyle is now known for bubbling social life yet depopulating unemployment crisis in Nigeria by offering the unemployed career opportunities in the hospitality sector.

## 5. The Activities of Soarak Hotel and Casino

Human activities have influenced the earth's ecosystem for many thousands of years. Nowadays the negative consequences of human actions can be noticed everywhere. Being one of the larger industries in the world, the hospitality industry is an important contributor to these problems [5]. The hospitality business is an important component of Tourism which caters for tourists in any given destination as such it is a valuable asset of the Travel and Tourism industry today. In other words, Travel and tourism is one of the largest industries of the world, responsible for US\$6.5 trillion in economic activity, 10.3% of global GDP and 234 million jobs worldwide in 2006, which corresponds to 8.7% of total employment according to the World Tourism Organization [5]. An industry this big and internationally oriented has an inevitable, large impact on the environment, economies, cultures and societies in general. The hotels, motels and all the various forms of accommodation comprise the largest sector of the travel and tourism industry, and it has been shown that hotels have the highest negative influence on the environment of all commercial buildings. According to estimations, an average hotel releases between 160 and 200 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per square meter of room floor area per year and water consumption per guest per night is between 170 and 440 l in the average five-star hotel. On average, hotels produce 1 kg of waste per guest per night [5]. In light of the above it is critically clear that the hospitality outlet of the tourism industry relies heavily on the environment. Therefore such interaction inevitably produces impact ideally; these impacts should have been positive, both in terms of benefits to destination areas and their residents [10]. Often, the... benefits of tourism come at a high price paid by nature and societies, endangering the core assets of tourism itself: nature and human cultures. These prices could be paid in the depletion of natural resources... result in water shortages; create great pressure on other local resources like energy, food, etc., that already might be in short supply or destroy beautiful scenic landscapes. Pollution from tourists has impacts on the global level that disturbs the local population of the caused community. Solid waste and littering in the nature despoils the natural environment [11].

Today, the inability of the Power Holding Corporation of Nigeria (PHCN) to supply constant electricity in the country has been accepted as a norm. The resultant effect of such a tradition does not only increase noise pollution but also releases carbonoxious gases into the air which has an adverse effect on the environment and human health. Noise, defined as 'unwanted sound', is perceived as an environmental stressor and nuisance [12]. Therefore, noise is one of the major environmental hazards of modern world originating from a wide variety of sources, including traffic (air, road, rail), industrial facilities, or social activities [13]. Unpleasant noise disrupts the tranquillity of the environment. In Nigeria such noise arise from the numerous activities of hospitality business especially hotels which most times is located within residual areas. Soarak hotel and Casino from its activities is one of such hotels which generate noise in other to be in business. The height of its noise pollution according to residence is usually during the weekend when noisy power generating plant would be used to sustain the merriment of its night club. Of a truth, in Nigeria electric power plants are today the nation's major alternative supply

of electricity and at the same time the largest industrial source of noise pollution. Therefore Soarak hotel and casino Lagos because of the irregularity of power supply the hotel has resorted to a nearly 24hour use of generating plant which causes noise pollution in the environment. Its sole dependence on generating plant for its customers comfort disregarding the adverse effect of its noise on the environment constitutes one of the negative impacts of hospitality industry on human health. To this effect [14] noted that noise effects have various impacts on mental and physical health and disturbance in daily activities. It may affect sleep, conversation, leading to perception of annoyance and causes hearing loss, cardiovascular problems as well as affecting task performance.

Atmospheric pollution is also gradually becoming a serious menace in Nigerian cities. It is claimed that Nigeria's carbon monoxide emissions from industrial processes, estimated at 96513 million metric tons in 1992, was the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding the Republic of South Africa [15]. Today in Nigeria air pollution is an environmental menace which constitutes a great discomfort to man's enjoyment of life and good health. It is not surprising that most people prefer to spend their leisure time in the villages far away from cities for a breath of clean air. This environmental nuisance is being aggravated by rapid growth of industries in Nigeria cities. As well as factories making extensive use of power plants along with automobiles all of which spew harmful gases into the air. In other to diversify the Nigeria economy from oil base tourism is being developed. Tourism is an industry that cuts other industries in effect its value to Nigeria economy cannot be over emphasized. However the growth of this sector is not without effects one of which is the emission of harmful gases which pollutes the air. Thus, air pollution is defined as the contamination of air by discharge of harmful substances, which can cause health problems including burning eyes and nose, itchy irritated throat and breathing problems [16]. On the other hand, air pollutant is any substance which may harm humans, animals, vegetation or material. As far as humans are concerned an air pollutant may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or serious illness or may pose a present or potential hazard to human health [17]. They went further to buttress the impact of air pollution in the following words "air pollution has both acute and chronic effects on human health, affecting a number of different systems and organs. It ranges from minor upper respiratory irritation to chronic respiratory and heart disease, lung cancer, acute respiratory infections in children and chronic bronchitis in adults, aggravating pre-existing heart and lung disease, or asthmatic attacks". Air pollutants are released from the activities of Sorak hotels and Casino from motor vehicles, garden equipment, paints and solvents, electric plant, and other activities that require fuel combustion such as burning of the hotel debris. [18] affirmed that electric power plants are the nation's largest industrial source of the pollutants that cause the above-listed ill effects. Also air pollutants not only adversely affect human health it impairs house painting thereby discoloring the beauty of nearby houses according to some of the complaints our informants living close to Soraok hotels.

Waste is classified as biodegradable (vegetal and animal matter) and non-biodegradable (inorganic matter: plastics, glass, metal). Hotels produce both biological wastes (human

sewage) and ashes if an incinerator is used in the establishment. Hazardous wastes that are normally associated with heavy industry and also with manufacturing industries are also present in hotels and restaurants. They include the solvents used in paint and floor finishes, the chemicals used in some cleaning products and batteries that contain heavy metals such as mercury [5].

In a recent online survey by the Sahara Reporters, an online news media focusing on Nigeria, Ibadan and Lagos were described as one of most the filthy centres' of the world. While Ibadan ranked as the number one dirtiest city in the world, Lagos, despite being the economic hub of Nigeria, was ranked fourth dirtiest city in the world. While the survey failed to enumerate the parameters with which it came about its conclusion as well as other cities and nations ranked in the survey, it nevertheless revealed one important fact – the fact that Nigeria is faced with the problem of waste disposal and management. Despite any criticism of the Sahara Reporters' survey findings, a trip within and around the cities of Lagos and Ibadan lend credence to the fact that Lagos and Ibadan are indeed dirty. In Lagos, as in Ibadan, piles of rubbish littered the roads and street corners [19].

However, Soarak hotel located in Lagos which has already been classified dirty has septic tank which most often emits offensive odor in the environment. Constant inhaling of such foul smell can impede the health of the residents or lead to an epidemic outbreak in the community. Also the organic and inorganic waste improperly disposed defaces the scenic beauty of the environmental.

Socially, tourism has an important role in enhancing cultural exchanges, improving living standards, supporting cultural preservation (e.g. museums, monuments) and stimulating locals' pride for their homeland [20]. Despite the above benefits, tourism interaction with the host community does not go unnoticed. As [21] asserted that tourism industry is not 'the smokeless industry it claims to be'. When locals perceive the tourists' lifestyles as more desirable than their own, the phenomenon of 'relative deprivation' can occur, with effects varying from adopting tourists' fashion, to the formation of a 'developed culture' that often includes aspects such as drug consumption and prostitution [22]. Wishing to live like tourists live often makes locals feel unhappy, frustrated or angry, thoughts stimulated at least partially by the fact that locals have to work to provide quality leisure for the tourists. These kinds of feelings sometimes lead to peculiar expressions, as reported in Cornwall where some locals put stickers on their cars saying, 'I'm not a tourist: I live here!' [23]. There is no doubt that tourists are foreigners in a foreign land yet it is expected of them to be sensitive to the norms of the new environment for better acquisition with the host community but reserve is the case. This could be seen in most attitude of tourist towards the residents. Most times tourist regards or exploits the residents as tourist attraction as they offer menial jobs to make a living. In this vein [24] noted that morals have been so eroded in Malindi that locals have come to accept the existence of prostitution. In fact, in some cases, informants spoke about the economic benefits of prostitution. The comments of Musyoki (*beach boy*) show the tolerance for prostitution in Malindi. Here tourists rob the locals of their tradition against their moral for entertainment. [20] pointed out that some of tourism's

damaging effects are shocking through their irreversibility for which we must answer to future generations. He further stated that a study of 100 schoolchildren in Kalutara, Sri Lanka, showed that 86 children had their first sexual experience at age 12 or 13, the majority with a foreign tourist. Thus, the presence of the hotel encouraged an immoral trade termed prostitution in the area. Also tourists/visitors mode of dressing especially the female poses a threat to the African modest dress culture which advocates that female must dress to cover their bodies. Some international female guests could dress half-naked thereby posing challenges to the cultural believe of the residents and the hotel staff. Nonetheless, the above negative impact does not rule out the positive impacts of tourism which the hotel has contributed immensely to the economic growth of the community.

## 6. Recommendation

In light of the growing environmental degradation, society is becoming increasingly aware of the need of adopting and enforcing more effective measures of environmental protection. Sustainable development, including the development of a more sustainable built environment, has thus become a vital priority and a veritable challenge of our time. The issue of sustainability should be addressed at all levels, in cooperation with policy makers, academia, industry, the general public and many other stakeholders. A number of factors indicate that the hotel industry has an important responsibility in this process [3]. Therefore, this paper recommends that hotel investors should include in their feasibility study environmental impact assessment (EIA). We believe that investors' knowledge of the environmental norms will curtail the ill effect of their activities on the environment. [8] attested to this fact that limited awareness amongst small business owners of their environmental footprint has consistently been identified as a barrier to change. Therefore through this study adequate knowledge of anti environmental activities would be stipulated which would guide or checkmate the activities of the Hospitality businesses.

## 7. Conclusion

Today, tourism is recognized as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Such rapid growth and its concurrent development practices have put particular pressure on sustainable tourism planning and policy. Sustainability is uppermost among the concern of almost all industries at this time. So it is not unusual to see particular attention being paid to it [25]. Thus, in order to assess the benefit that could accrue a community through the establishment of hospitality business, the sustainability of the environment must be paramount. This is because the tie between hospitality businesses and the physical environment emphasizes that the hospitality business does not exist in a vacuum. This invariable implies that its survival anchors exceedingly on its ability to minimize its negative impacts on the surrounding environment. In other words, the quality of tourists' patronage will be reduced considerably, when the natural setting that is the environment of the hospitality business activity is polluted, defaced or loses its aesthetic qualities as a result of investors insensitivity to environmental demands. In addition, hotel business may lose its tourist patronage if

there are social problems such as the commercialization of local cultures, increase in crime (from drugs/alcohol abuse and prostitution) and societal hostility. Therefore, the mitigation of these possible negative impacts appears essential in order to sustain the continuous operation of hospitality business. Balancing the impacts of hospitality business is quite necessary for qualitative business environment as sustainability issues cuts across nearly all aspects of hotel business ranging from ownership to management. Thus proper management of environmental, social, and financial factors is crucial in order to promote responsible business operations over time.

Nevertheless, due to its beneficial aspects, tourism specifically hospitality businesses is strongly encouraged in most countries and is expected to continue growing. At the same time, there is an increasing recognition that tourism in its extensive developments has potentially damaging effects on nature, societies and cultures. Therefore, concerns for responsible tourism practices should have an equal focus on correcting past mistakes and on preventing future ones from occurring; thus, a clear preventative approach must be embedded into current tourism policies and strategies at all levels, if tourism is to help society make progress towards sustainability [20].

Conclusively, it is clear the environment is an indispensable factor in the tourism industry. As a recreational and entertainment oriented industry the sustainability of the environment determines the sustainability of the business. Thus, in order to accrue all the benefits embedded in this industry at the same time reduce the negative effects arising from its operation [26] suggested tourism/hospitality investors must ensure that:

- The locals are consulted before the establishment of the industry;
- The activities of the industry would obstruct the norms of the community
- The industry would be immense benefit to the community
- The negative impacts would be well managed in other not to deface the community

From the foregoing, it is a great challenge to make a profitable tourism business in an area without some negative effect to the local communities. It is possible for the tourism industry to cooperate with other industries and bring benefits to both the tourism organizations and local businesses. The first step to achieve it is to understand the needs and desires of both the host community and the tourist.

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