

Article

Impact of Insecurity on the Hospitality Industry: A Study of selected Hotels in Nnewi Town of Anambra State, Nigeria

Adachukwu Egbuna¹, Afamefuna Eyisi², Nneoma Ololo³, Emeka Okonkwo⁴, Joshua Uzuegbu⁵

^{1&4}Department of Archaeology and Tourism, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²School of HASS, College of Law, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University, Perth

^{3&5}Humanities Unit, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Correspondence: nneoma.ololo@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This study explored the impacts of insecurity on the operations of selected hotels in Nnewi town of Anambra State. The study was anchored on social disruption theory to interpret how insecurity has affected visitors' intention to visit the selected hotels. A qualitative design was adopted, and a purposive sampling technique was used to identify eight hotels. The study employed interviews and participant observation as data collection instruments and a thematic approach for the analysis. The findings showed that insecurity significantly impacts the performance of the hospitality industry in Nnewi. This is evident in how insecurity affects the hotels' operations as it threatens the lives of workers and customers. The challenges have equally affected customer patronage, the work environment, and income generation. It was observed that besides the government enforcing and strengthening the security system in Anambra state through training, provision of gadgets and enacting stringent policies (such as curfew), the hotels have also employed measures to boost guests' confidence and guarantee their safety. The measures include using CCTV cameras, providing guest registration forms for identification, and using an activation machine to monitor guest access to rooms. The study concludes that curbing insecurity in the study area requires more proactive mechanisms and strong collaborations between security stakeholders in the area.

Keywords: *Insecurity, hospitality business, hotels, customer patronage, Nnewi town*

Introduction

Tourism is a household name in the development plans of many governments. It has become one of the key drivers of many countries' economies as it can boost local and national income and create jobs (Adeleke, 2010; Eyisi, 2021). However, despite how tourism has grown globally, the opportunities may never yield their full potential without a peaceful environment, especially in developing countries (Awazi, 2015). There is no gainsaying that the global tourism industry is sensitive, especially in a world of fluctuating relationships, uncertain life changes, and one outbreak or another. This means that tourism demand and supply can be susceptible to terrorism, insecurity, political violence and natural disasters in different countries, which have increased in the last decade (Seabra, Reis & Abrantes, 2000). Saha and Yab (2014) see insecurity as the most critical nexus, creating disruption and imbalance that can jeopardize the quality and brand of a tourism product and adversely impact travel demand. Insecurity significantly influences how potential travellers perceive a destination. The term could mean the absence of safety or presence of danger, hazard, uncertainty, inadequately guarded or protected, lacking stability, troubled, lack of protection and unsafe (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpan-Robaro, 2013). This explains why stakeholders should put adequate mechanisms in place while planning tourism.

For tourism to thrive in any destination or country, tourists must be guaranteed their safety and that of their properties. This explains why countries that are prone to terrorism, insurgency and other forms of insecurity (such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Iran, Iraq and even Nigeria) are hardly known as preferred tourist destinations. The negative images projected due to crisis and insecurity are often difficult to dislodge even after the end of such a crisis. There is unprecedented insecurity in Nigeria, which could explain why the country faces challenges in marketing its tourism resources, especially to international tourists, who see the country as unsafe for tourism (Achebe, 1983). More than three decades down the line, the story is still the same. Ozoigbo (2019) noted that insecurity is one of the country's most glaring and talked about. It is on the verge of becoming the country's identity, as no day passes without cases of insecurity. These insecurities range from the activities of Fulani-herders attacks, Boko Haram insurgencies, armed robbery attacks, kidnapping, political and religious crises, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants, child trafficking, destruction of vehicles, burning of churches, police stations, schools, hospitals, shops, army barracks, residential houses and abduction of expatriates (Ndubuisi-Okolo & Anigbuogu, 2019). Another sign of insecurity is the rate at which the country's economic, political, social and religious activities are bastardized, causing foreign investors to change their investment plans (Nwagbala, Ifureze & Okafor, 2022), even at the state level.

In Anambra State, most hotels are experiencing a decline in operations due to cases of insecurity. Some of these security uncertainties in Anambra State stem from the ongoing restrictions on the movement of people tagged 'sit-at-home' every Monday of the week (Onyekelu, 2022) by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a secessionist group advocating for the freedom of the Igbo people of the Southeastern region. Failure to comply with the order often results in property destruction and loss of lives. This is also the case in different parts of Nnewi town in recent times. Nnewi is the hub of conglomerates and businesses and has recently experienced a rapid decline in operations due to the escalation of insecurity. As quipped by Nwagbala et al. (2022), insecurity in different parts of Anambra State can be linked to political agitations and weak security systems. All these have affected business operations on certain days of the week. Businesses such as hotels and other hospitality outlets now operate at minimum capacity, as the safety of lives and properties is no longer guaranteed. This is an impending issue for the survival of hotels in Nnewi. Commenting on this, Udodiugwu, Okafor, Obiakor and Onyia (2022) added that the hospitality industry in Anambra State is currently suffering from security uncertainties, having experienced deplorable security threats in the last five years. Consequently, most hotels in the state strive to remain in business amidst fierce competition from their rivals.

Whilst insecurity has impacted Nigeria's hospitality industry, there is still limited research on the Anambra State case study. Against this backdrop, the current paper

seeks to understand the impacts of insecurity on the hospitality industry in Nnewi town of Anambra State and measures taken to address the ongoing menace. The study approaches the topic by interviewing the management of selected hotels to understand how insecurity has affected customer patronage and their operations and the possible ways forward. The next section reviews the literature to identify what exists and how the current study will contribute to knowledge.

Literature Review

Insecurity has manifested in different forms and shades. It could be insurgency, terrorism, armed robbery attacks, kidnapping, communal land disputes, assassination or tribal and religious conflicts. Many studies have demonstrated how insecurity hinders the development of different sectors of a nation's economy. For instance, Blomberg, Hess and Weerapana (2004) demonstrated in their study that insecurity, mainly resulting from terrorist activities, had a detrimental impact on economic growth as businesses and investors operate their day-to-day activities fearing the unknown. Similar findings were reported by Sandler and Enders (2008) when they compared the impacts of insecurity (terrorism) on developed and developing nations. The research findings were significant because developed nations had larger economies, and terrorist activity might cause resources to be reallocated among different sectors. However, the same cannot be said in developing nations, including many African and Asian countries, where insecurity threatens to crumble their economic growth. This could be attributed to the level of economic and political developments in many of those countries, as well as the spread of dividends of good governance, as demonstrated by studies that focused on the Global South.

Regarding insecurity in developing countries, Gaibullov and Sandler (2009; 2008) analyzed its impact on per capita growth in Asia. They found that insecurity hindered economic growth significantly. Internal conflicts in the region affected growth twice as much as international conflicts. At a country level, insecurity can equally impinge development. Shabir, Naeem and Ihtsham's (2015) research on the impact of insecurity on Pakistan's economic growth suggested that insecurity had negatively affected the Pakistani government's efforts to grow the economy, which is similar to the findings of Zakaria, Jun and Ahmed (2019). Likewise, Gupta, Clements, Bhattacharya and Chakravarti (2004) conducted a study in India and Pakistan to understand which insecurity activities cause more spending for the government. Their findings affirmed that armed conflict and terrorism lead to a higher share of defence spending in total government expenditure in Pakistan than in India, which affects Pakistan's growth compared to India's. The findings of these studies showed that insecurity is a global challenge that affects the efforts made to develop the economies of many countries in the developing world, which has attracted the attention of different governments at all levels. Therefore, the current study will

highlight the Nigerian case using Nnewi town to contribute to existing knowledge on the topic area.

Security has been identified as one of the five forces that would drive the Nigerian hospitality industry to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ajayi, Ojo, Jimoh and Chinansa (2022) posited that the Boko Haram rebellion in the northeast keeps domestic and foreign investors away despite Nigeria's rich cultural assets and natural beauty. Some studies have focused on the impacts of insecurity on economic activities, particularly in the regions that are considered to be terrorist targets (mainly the northeast). Notwithstanding, research showed that different forms of insecurity have spread throughout the country. A survey by Achumba et al. (2013) highlighted the statistics of the country's cases of insecurity from 2000 to 2008 (see Table 1). The statistics showed how insecurity has continued to grow as the government and security stakeholders seem not to be fighting the scourges head-on as expected.

Table 1: Level of crime in Nigeria from 2000 to 2008

Year	Theft	Armed Robbery	Kidnapping	Assassination	Fraud	Total
2000	29,127	1,877	243	1,255	7,927	40,429
2001	40,796	2,809	349	2,120	10,234	56,308
2002	35,231	3,889	337	2,117	9,134	50,708
2003	33,124	3,497	410	2,136	9,508	48,675
2004	37,289	3,142	349	2,550	9,532	52,862
2005	46,111	2,074	798	2,550	9,580	61,113
2006	41,901	2,863	372	2,074	6,395	53,605
2007	21,082	2,327	277	2,000	5,860	31,546
2008	23,927	2,340	309	1,956	5,058	33,590

Source: Achumba et al. (2013)

Whilst the statistics in Table 1 are dated, a good point is that insecurity in Nigeria within the period exceeded 400,000, highlighting the country as unsafe for businesses, mainly by international media targeted at foreign visitors. This could explain why analysts believe there is low confidence in Nigeria's travel and tourism business (Ojo, Busayo & Yusof, 2014). It suffices to say that insecurity has made life miserable for many Nigerians because the situation has resulted in citizens living in internally displaced peoples' (IDPs) homes. To put the insecurity situation in the proper context, a recent study by Ukoji and Ukoji (2023) showed that deaths resulting from insecurity in Nigeria grew from 4,438 in 2006 to 13,613 in 2021. This increase showed that Nigeria is getting more unsafe because the security personnel are yet to find a pragmatic solution to the menace. The authors equally highlighted the number of deaths emanating from violence at the state level. The statistics showed that out of the 36 states in Nigeria, only Ekiti State in the southwest recorded less than 1,000 violent deaths between 2006 and 2021, followed by Jigawa and Kebbi States in the northwest with 1,108 and 1,392, respectively. It was not surprising that the majority

of the violent deaths in the country as a result of insecurity occurred in the northern part. Borno State in the northeast recorded 41692 violent deaths, while Adamawa in the same region recorded 5,117. Kaduna and Zamfara in the northwest recorded 8,534 and 6,843, respectively, while Benue in the northcentral had 6,370. Lagos State recorded 11,410 in the period.

Still putting the figures in context, in addition to the insecurity indices highlighted in Table 1 (theft, kidnapping, assassination, fraud, etc.), Ukoji and Ukoji (2023) gave statistics on the number of violent deaths resulting from different causes. Their statistics showed that Nigeria is indeed dealing with varying forms of violence. The violence indices identified include cattle grazing, terrorist insurgency, crime, land and communal conflict, natural disasters, oil production and distribution, market issues and road crashes (see Figure 1). The available statistics showed that crime caused the highest number of deaths in Nigeria between 2006 and 2021 (about 51,425 deaths resulting from 19,043 criminal acts). This is closely followed by terrorist insurgency (50,252) from 2288 terrorist acts and road traffic crashes (27,645) resulting from 6354 road crash incidents. The least deaths occurred from convicts’ execution (19), market issues (563) and sorcery (1738). The point to note is that insecurity in Nigeria has risen to a level of wide outcry. All the indices highlighted above combined to give Nigeria a negative image at the global level. The country is today seen as one of the least peaceful countries in West Africa (a little above Mali and Burkina Faso), according to the Global Peace Ranking (2024). The country dropped to 147 out of 163 in the 2024 global peace ranking (38 in Africa out of 44), indicating a decline in peace.

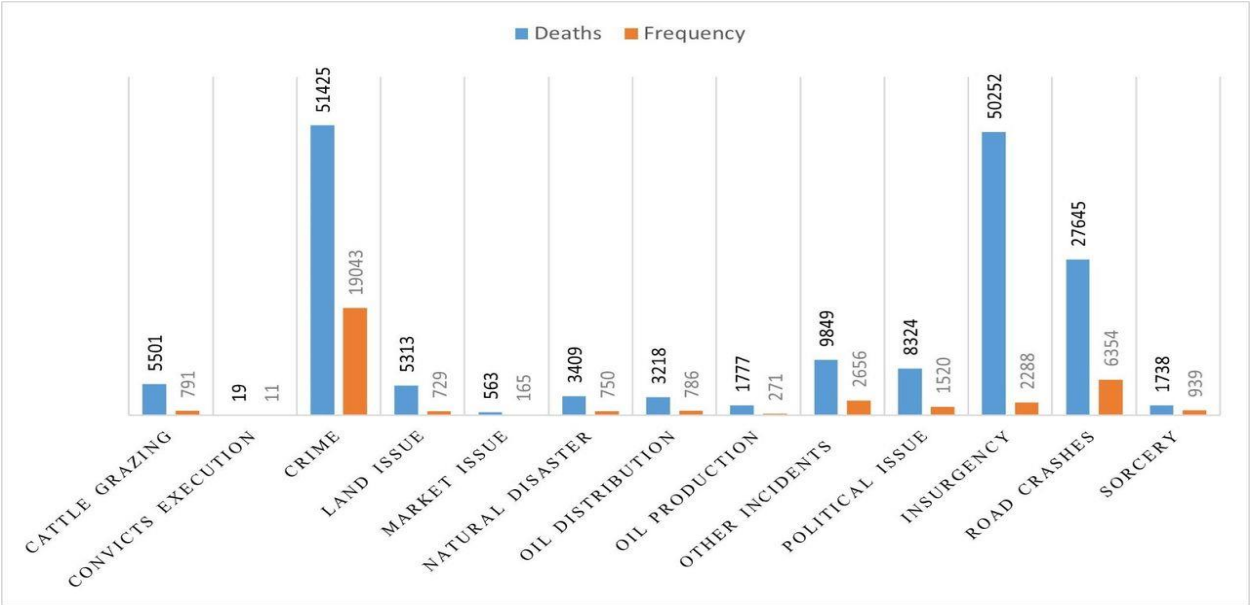


Figure 1: Distribution of Violent Deaths in Nigeria by Causes (2006-2021)
Source: Ukoji and Ukoji (2023)

Ujah and Eboh (2006) further identified the implications of insecurity on business activities in Nigeria. In the study, the authors viewed these implications from two

broad perspectives: the perspective of potential business investment and the perspective of existing business enterprise. From the former, they highlighted that insecurity discourages investment by making it unattractive. This is because it increases the cost of doing business either through direct loss of goods and properties or the cost of taking precautions against business risks and uncertainty. These costs could have a negative impact on business development and progress. For the latter, they recognized that the insecurity situation could, and in many cases, halt business operations during periods of violence and also cause the closure of many enterprises, especially in the areas or zones where insecurity is rife and a daily occurrence, in a bid to protect lives of operators and property. Dauda (2014) equally evaluated insecurity in Nigeria and how it grossly affects the socio-economic lifestyle of the citizens. The study focused on Yobe State and showed that its socio-economic activities were negatively impacted by insecurity. This explains why it is deeply disheartening to many Nigerians that many years after the emergence and subsequent atrocities committed by this dreaded group, the government still seems to be treating them with kids' gloves.

In the tourism and hospitality sector, insecurity is also a serious issue that has affected the industry. As tourism develops, safety becomes more important. In the opinion of Dada (2011), security is paramount in long-term tourism planning and development. Security warnings have been repeatedly issued by Western and Asian countries, discouraging most tourists from visiting Nigeria, particularly the northern region, because it is vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Rebellion, robbery and kidnapping have severely disrupted the flow of international tourists, affecting the country's economy. Similar to Adeleke (2010), Eyisi, Lee and Trees (2023a; 2023b) and Eyisi (2021) identified insecurity as one of the challenges affecting the growth and sustainability of the Nigerian tourism industry, charging the government and other key security personnel to take pragmatic steps. Chauhan, Shukia and Negi's (2018) study highlighted the insecurity situation in Indian hotels, such as fire outbreaks, bombing, terrorism and vandalism. They equally commented on the effects of insecurity on the hospitality sector, such as decreased income, less patronage and reservations, and poor quality delivery of services. The authors noted that to curb insecurity, hoteliers have put up adequate measures to ensure a safe environment for guests. These measures include guest profiling, using smart cards for identification passes, installing security control rooms and circuit breaker televisions, and emergency plans. This resonates with the views of Hymanson (2011).

Although studies have been conducted on insecurity in Nigeria to highlight its implications for sustainable development, none has explored the impacts of insecurity on the hospitality industry in the study area. There is a need to address the shortfall because, as Ajayi et al. (2022) opined, the hospitality industry has contributed immensely to economic development based on investment from the private sector. More so, the security situation in Nigeria has affected hoteliers. With

less customer patronage, the implications are dwindling hotel services, inability to pay wages and sometimes, job losses (Rotimi et al., 2013). As limited research has been undertaken to address the connections between Nigeria's weak security system and hotel patronage in Anambra State, particularly in Nnewi town, this paper will discuss how insecurity impacts the hospitality industry in selected hotels in the town and how it can be addressed to support the sustainability of the industry. The next section will focus on the theoretical grounding that guides the study to help put the paper in the proper context.

Theoretical Underpinning

Using theory in research helps to understand how abstract concepts can lead to interpreting realities. Omonijo, Obiorah, Onyekere Oliver, Anyaegbunam, Shaibu and Ogunwa (2017, p.61) regarded theory usage in research as a 'system of thoughts or concepts carefully formulated, tested to expound and predict certain phenomenon, mostly those hinged on common ideologies, which are independent of the phenomenon been elucidated.' Theories are formulated to analyze or explain social life issues of interest to a researcher(s). We adopted social disruption theory (SDT) to understand how insecurity affects the well-being of individuals, social groups, and businesses (hotels) in Nnewi. Propounded by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin in 1917, SDT deals with growth issues from the community perspective and explains how they can affect individuals and social groups. It describes social life's alteration, dysfunction or breakdown, often in a community setting. Social disruption implies a radical transformation in which the old certainties of modern society are falling away, and something new is emerging. Natural disasters, conflicts, crises, human displacements, economic, technological, and demographic changes, and controversial policies might cause disruption. SDT depicts that communities experiencing rapid growth could enter a crisis, leading to a loss of traditional routines and attitudes. The crisis affects individuals' mental health, worldviews, behaviour and social relationships. The theory involves a rapid community change, indicative of community disorganization, and can be applied in tourism research.

Tourism development within different communities seems to provide excellent settings for examining some postulations of SDT because residents of those communities usually experience relatively rapid growth accompanied by intensive development and rapid social change over a short period (Greider, Krannich & Berry, 1991). This is often the case because tourism usually positively and negatively impacts local communities, their socio-cultural values, way of life, economic activities and environment. As used in this research, SDT means an alteration in the peoples' usual day-to-day way of life occasioned by insecurity in Nnewi, causing a change in the way businesses and the hospitality industry run their daily activities. Nnewi town is known for its business tourism, and tourists lodge in hotels and other accommodation outlets when they visit the town. Subsequently, with the ongoing

security challenges in Anambra State generally and Nnewi town in particular, the usual ways of running businesses might have shifted. Presently, tourists and customers are likely to avoid or minimize the number of visits or length of stay, preferring online shopping or ordering goods via social media platforms. Therefore, this paper aims to ascertain if such is the case and explore the paradigm shift in the hospitality industry due to insecurity in the study area. The paper will also identify some strategies for addressing the spate of insecurity activities in the area.

The Study Area

Nnewi town is a commercial centre in Anambra State of Southeastern Nigeria and has a long history of urban development, which informed the choice of the case study. According to ANSSIPA (2022), Anambra State ranks 1st in commercial trade in the Southeast and 3rd in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano State. Nnewi is located on the equatorial map between longitude 06° 54' 37.2420E and latitude 060 0' 37.8684'' N. It is located east of the Niger River, about 22 kilometres from Onitsha town. Geographically, Nnewi falls within the tropical rainforest region, an area of rich agricultural produce and the epicentre of business trade (Anambrastate.gov.ng). Nnewi has two local government areas: Nnewi North and Nnewi South. Nnewi North, the sampled area for the study, comprises four quarters: Otolo, Uruagu, Umudim, and Nnewichi (this will be explained further in the methodology section). Figure 2 is the map of Anambra State, showing Nnewi North.

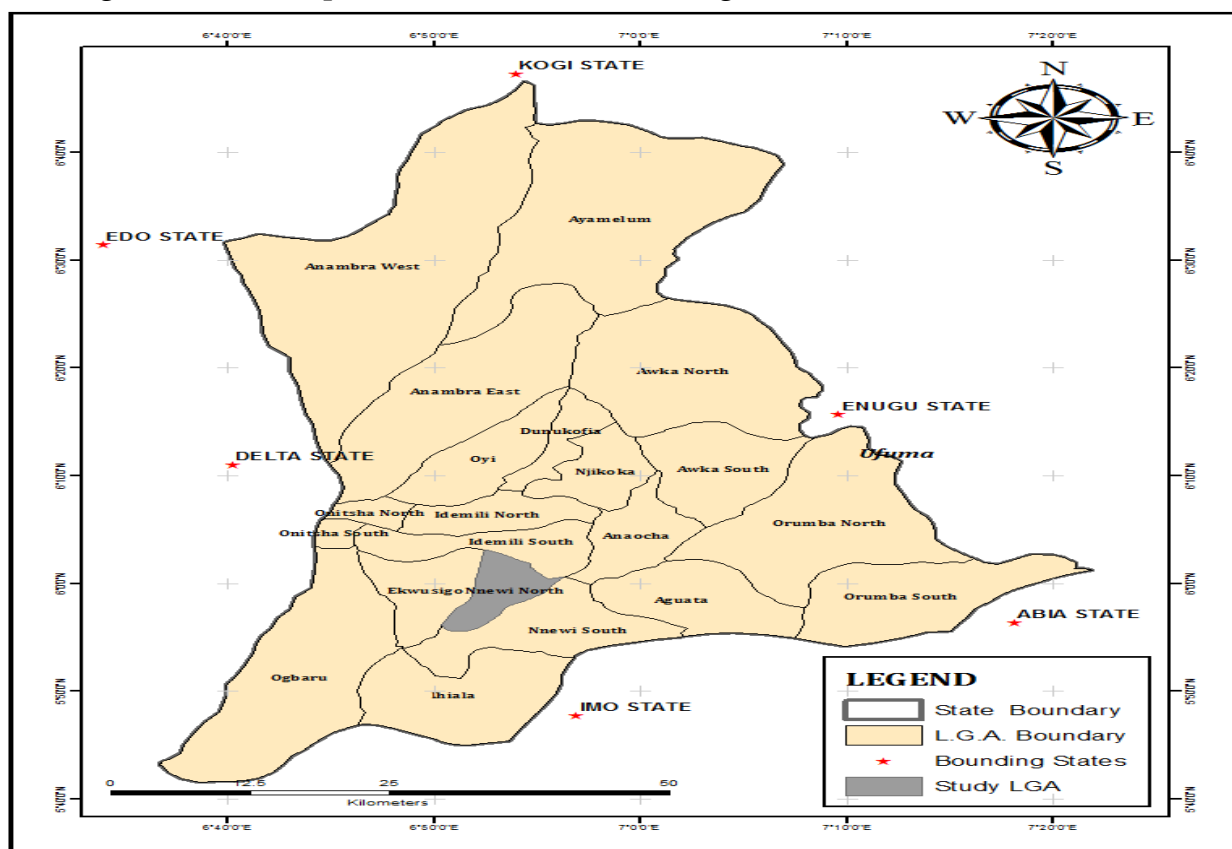


Figure 2: Map of Anambra State showing Nnewi North LGA and surrounding towns

The name Nnewi is derived from the role a rabbit (*Ewi*) played during a threatened invasion of the town by enemies whose identities are unknown (Alutu 1985). The people summoned a native doctor to prepare a charm to help them abort the invasion. It was recounted that at night, the charm would transform into a rabbit covering the entire boundaries of Nnewi with its footprints. When the invaders approached, they saw the footprints and concluded nobody inhabited the area. Therefore, they retreated, and the invasion fizzled out. As a result, the town became safe, and in commemorating this event, the town was named Nnewi (mother of rabbits) (Alutu, 1985; Oriji, 2009). Today, the rabbit is a totem animal in the town, and it is taboo for people to kill and eat it. Nnewi spans over 200 square miles (520 km²) of landmass. About 70% of the land is rich in agriculture, which explains why the people produce food and tree crops, livestock and fisheries (Ejikeme, Ojiako, Onwuzuligbo & Ezech, 2017). Most indigenes have 'mbubọ' (home gardens) and ubi (out-station gardens) where they cultivate farm products. Most prime cash crops include oil palm, raffia palm, groundnut, melon, cotton, cocoa, rubber and maize. Food crops such as yam, cassava, cocoyam, breadfruit and three-leaf yam are also produced in large quantities.

Socio-politically, the traditional monarch of Nnewi is called the Igwe, which predates the arrival of Europeans in the 15th century. The smallest unit of traditional socio-political organization in Nnewi is the 'Umunna'. Members of the Umunna consist of individual households that descended from one father. The head of each Umunna is called Okpara, the eldest surviving male. Next to the Umunna hierarchy is the Nkpuru, which comprises various Umunnas. At the lineage level, functions are rested in the hands of the 'Ichie' (often the eldest adult male in the lineage). The Ichie, by his age and office, becomes the spiritual and political head of the villages in Nnewi. He is also in charge of the family shrines. Another prominent organ of authority in Nnewi is the 'Umuada' (women born in the town). The council of Umuada make laws that control women in the town and are highly respected.

Research Methods

Research is a scientific investigation process that systematically collects, analyses, and interprets data to answer questions or solve real-life problems. Being systematic, it has methods and techniques to gather data. In gathering data, the researcher focuses on various approaches, be it quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. We employed the qualitative approaches to data collection through ethnography. Ethnography is a qualitative method that lends itself to the study of societies' beliefs, social interactions, and behaviours, involving participation and observation over some time (Reeves, Kuper & Hodges, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined it as a tool that involves the social scientific observer, the observed, the research report as text, and the audience to which the text is presented. It is a flexible method that involves immersing oneself in a particular community to observe their behaviour and

interactions closely. It entails entering the private space of participants to interact and observe the aspects of their lives that help to address the research question(s) (Holloway, Brown & Shipway, 2010). We used ethnography to allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and discern the social dynamics of the people. In the ethnographic sense, we employed participant observation, in-depth interviews and secondary sources as data collection instruments.

Participant observation enables researchers to learn about the people under study in their natural setting through observing and participating in their activities. It also requires immersing oneself in the data to understand what is going on and write about it as coherently as possible. For this paper, the first author used the participant as an observer variant of participant observation, spent time in the study area to interact with the participants and observe how they run their daily businesses while documenting the observations. She also conducted in-depth interviews (semi-structured variant) with hotel staff, such as the general manager, general supervisors, and other hotel workers. She used the prepared question guide to guide the one-on-one conversations with the hotel officials. The participants all gave their consent to be part of the research. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. All the interviews were held at the premises of the hotels during official business hours (between 8 am and 5 pm). Each participant was given a pseudonym to conceal their identity and minimize the risk of identifying who said what. To corroborate the data from primary sources during the fieldwork, we consulted secondary sources (textbooks, journal articles, magazines, and online articles) relevant to the research.

The study was conducted in Nnewi North Local Government Area, which was selected through purposive sampling. The rationale behind choosing the study area is that large and small-scale businesses are significant in the domain. Nnewi North comprises Otoló, Uruagu, Nnewichi, and Umudim. We purposively sampled the four quarters because of the number of hospitality outlets that operate there. Two hotels from each quarter were selected for this research, making up eight (see Table 2). Data useful for this study were obtained from the participants identified in the eight hotels and systematically analyzed.

Table 2: Quarters and names of hotels studied

Quarter	Name of the hotels	Classification of the hotels
Otoló	Hotel De Robin & Ascon Hotel	3-star & 2-star, respectively
Uruagu	Next Center Hotel & Swiss Park Hotel and Suites	4-star & 3-star, respectively
Nnewichi	Grand Seasons Hotel & Cinnamon Hotel.	4-star & 2-star, respectively
Umudim	Daraba Hotel & De Vegas Hotel.	4-star & 3-star, respectively

Being qualitative research, we employed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, like content analysis, has become very popular in social science research (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013), and tourism is not an exception (Eyisi & Okpoko, 2023).

They both help qualitative researchers to make deeper meaning of textual data by understanding who said what, why, when, how and to who. For the thematic analysis, we explored the data collected to identify common themes or patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly from the dataset. We focused on the insecurity activities (which may or may not have been frequently identified in the literature) hindering hospitality operations, as mentioned by the participants. The subjectivity and flexibility that go with qualitative data analysis encouraged the exploration and interpretation of the data. We first decided on the unit of analysis to be the participants' comments about the impacts of insecurity on hospitality operations in Nnewi and possible solutions to the menace. We then created nodes to drop the participants' comments based on similarities and differences. We started initial coding, refined the process along the way and completed the coding process. We sorted the contents of the nodes based on how they relate to each other, generated categories, and derived our themes from the coded data. The analysis followed an iterative process until the authors agreed on the themes presented in this paper.

Findings

This section discusses the themes for addressing the impacts of insecurity on the hospitality industry in Nnewi and how to control the menace. Some verbatim comments from the participants will be highlighted to increase the credibility of the process. It is important to note that the themes are subjective, meaning other researchers could have chosen different concepts to suit their worldview, which confirms that subjectivity is a characteristic of qualitative research. The themes showed that the participants acknowledged the negative impacts of insecurity on the hotels studied and suggested some strategies for addressing the menace. The themes are now discussed in detail.

Fear of uncertainty

All the participants noted that insecurity in the area has made it difficult for many hotels to survive as owners are uncertain of what the day holds and often do not open for business. The challenges of insecurity pose a risk that hotel managers greatly dread. A participant at De Vegas Hotel complained of low patronage due to the increasing spate of violence and insecurity in some parts of the town. The current situation has scared customers, reducing patronage to less than 50% and affecting their sales. Another participant at Hotel De Robin expressed his frustration, stating that Nnewi's economy, which is service-driven because of numerous business conglomerates, hotels and clubs, has been crippled by the activities of the dreaded unknown gunmen, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and kidnappers terrorizing Anambra State. He noted that their clientele from within and outside Anambra State has dwindled. He also mentioned how their hotel stopped serving the buffet because its patronage had thinned. In his words:

Insecurity has affected the hotel businesses in this town because of limited guest patronage. For instance, our hotel no longer serves a buffet, which before the security challenges made the hotel fully packed to maximum capacity. I remember that we often recommended other hotels to customers because we ran out of space.

Similarly, another participant at Grand Season Hotel expressed how fear of the unknown has led to declining customers coming to their hotel as nobody knows when the miscreants will attack. This has led to many hotel staff not showing up for work whenever there is an attack or rumours of an impending attack, and the hotel management cutting down on the prices of its services to continue attracting more customers. The participant noted:

The fear affecting the hotel's patronage has even forced the management to scale down the room tariff from ₦25000 to ₦15000 (Classic Rooms) and ₦30,000 to ₦20000 (Deluxe Rooms). Still, every week, particularly on Mondays [the day set aside by the separatist group in Southeastern Nigeria for sit-at-home], we experience low sales. It has posed a serious issue as the hotel can no longer pay staff and has retrenched many of them.

In the same vein, the situation was not different at Dabara Hotel, where a staff asserted that the location of their hotel made it easy for guests to access them. Before the insecurity challenges, the hotel recorded habitual fun seekers (young men and women) who came to have a nice time. However, the number of guests that patronize them has declined. As a result of insecurity, people fear the unknown and do not come out like before (especially on stipulated sit-at-home days) to patronize hotel services.

Low revenue generation

Some participants commented that the hospitality industry in the area generates revenue, contributes to the gross domestic product, and improves the labour market by creating jobs. A participant at Swiss Park Hotel complained about how insecurity has bedevilled their business and impacted the revenue they generated. The participant noted: *'The hotel has recorded a decline in turnover and gross profit from 2021-2023'*. Also, a participant at Next Center Hotel argued that managing hotel businesses in the area has always been challenging, with little or no electricity and high reliance on diesel as a power source. This reduces the hotel's profit margin because the power supply must run for 24 hours to give the customers comfort. Coupled with banditry, kidnapping and insecurity threats, the hospitality business has been crippled. This period has recorded a drop in the influx of guests. The participant puts it this way: *If there is no movement of indigenes within Anambra State, is it the movement of tourists that would take place?'* The participant further asserted that the insecurity threats had affected their hotel's business outlook as the management unanimously withdrew some staff benefits and entitlements. A large number of the hotels have either shut down entirely or temporarily. All these stem from the ongoing insecurity issues.

Another participant at Dabara Hotel has this to say about the impacts of insecurity on their hotel:

The problems of insecurity, mainly caused by these unknown gunmen in Anambra State and Nnewi town in particular, have reduced our sales. Now, the owner of the hotel is gradually taking off the staff privileges, including the free staff food for the day as well as discounted soft drinks.

A participant at Cinnamon Hotels complained that the revenue of most hotels within the town dropped due to fear of internal and external forces. The participant highlighted that aside from the heinous activities of those who claim to be members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) via their shootings and killings of innocent civilians, the activities of cult groups also discourage guests from visiting and lodging in hotels, thereby dropping the profit margin of many hotels. The sit-at-home is another reason many customers do not visit hotels, especially on Mondays, because of the sit-at-home order. The participant gave an example of the Paradise Hotel, where suspected armed robbers/cultists were once arrested, which affected the operations of the hotel. Such an unfortunate incident can dent the image of hotels and might likely force operators to shut them down, leading to loss of revenue and jobs. In the same light, hotels cited close to Paradise Hotel are also most likely to be affected as people who heard about the sad news would be scared to patronize them.

Threat to Investment

This was examined from two perspectives: undermining the public and/or private sector's support for hospitality and tourism; and relocation of residents and/or businesses.

Undermining the public and/or private sector's support for hospitality and tourism

Participants commented that insecurity is a huge threat to investment in the hospitality sector in the area, which thrives in a peaceful environment and free movement of people. A participant in Dabara Hotels posited that most investors are shying away from Anambra State due to insecurity despite being one of the nation's commercial hubs. The hospitality sector in the area still feels the impacts of IPOB and ESN. The participant added that investors consider the entire Southeastern region as prone to attacks because of the resurgence of these groups. Hence, they prefer safer and more secure environments such as Lagos and Abuja for investment. A participant at Grand Seasons Hotel made it clear that although the government has done everything in its power to build the investors' confidence, such as scrapping the Monday sit-at-home by employing vigilante groups, the investors are still double-minded and would instead look elsewhere. A participant at De Robin Hotel noted: *'No investor would be proud to invest in Anambra State where confidence in investment is low. With the activities of the IPOB, foreign investors would be afraid to invest in such a volatile environment.'*

Relocation of residents and/or businesses

All the participants complained about how insecurity in the study area has resulted in business relocation. They complained that insecurity has affected the regional economy, peace and job opportunities. A Dabara Hotels and Suites participant added: *'Those people wey dey carry gun dey find who dem go waste im life don make people dey run o. Nothing dey this place again o'*. This means that miscreants carrying guns around who are looking for those to kill have forced residents to run away. Participants at Swiss Park Hotel and De Robin Hotel noted, respectively:

Movement in this area is no longer free, and you do not know what will happen as you leave your home searching for daily bread. People are now living in fear because of the rising cases of abductions, kidnappings, unrest and insecurity. Hence, they relocate elsewhere to protect their lives, businesses and properties.

On an average day, we clean up to 25-30 rooms daily. In high season, we can clean for three straight weeks. If you ask the receptionist now, you will see that we do not even have up to 10 rooms to clean the next day. This is a serious concern because we are no longer sure of our jobs. Many people are leaving this place regularly.

A participant cited a friend's family that relocated to Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State in the South-South because their mother, who usually collects bank loans to run her stockfish business, could not meet up with repayment due to insecurity. Businesses have collapsed, people are running into debt, and indigenes and non-indigenes are relocating before getting killed by hoodlums. Similarly, some firms are shifting their operations to other states that are more peaceful.

Discussion

Through the themes, our findings confirmed the application of SDT as they highlighted the impacts of societal decay on business operations in the study area. The themes represent the major challenges the hospitality industry faces in the study area and possible solutions to curb the menace. The themes, which include a decline in sales and turnover, low revenue generation, and fear of the unknown, capture the feelings and perceptions of the participants. The hospitality industry in the area is currently in decline, which indirectly affects the survival of many hotels. These findings are consistent with similar studies that explored attacks in Nigeria and how they impact people's and businesses' socio-economic activities (Awojobi, 2014; Dauda, 2014). The themes further showed that the hospitality industry was booming before insecurity started in the area, and guests and visitors came to Nnewi for business trips. This is understandable, as peace and security significantly impact the tourism and hospitality industry (Adeleke, 2010; Ujah & Eboh, 2006). If nothing is done soon to address the ongoing menace, the hotels in Nnewi might lose many

customers. The findings also resonate with the works of Eyisi et al. (2023a; 2023b), Eyisi (2021) and Shabir et al. (2015) about insecurity as the bane of tourism and hospitality development in Nigeria. Another point that should be noted about participants' perceptions of insecurity in the area is that many indigenes are also relocating to safe regions of the country.

Concerning the specific impacts of insecurity on the hospitality industry in Nnewi, the participants are not just dissatisfied with their jobs and fear losing them; they also fear for their lives. This is consistent with Dauda (2014), who noted that the challenges most businesses face because of insecurity include the inability of workers to step outside for fear of being attacked. Staff downsizing, leading to poor work performance and a decline in economic growth, is also a serious issue that should be appropriately considered to ensure that management keeps staff turnover in the hospitality industry enticing in the future. The implication that can be gleaned from the themes is that insecurity negatively impacts the hospitality industry in Nnewi. Ujah and Eboh (2006) highlighted the nexus between the two, showing that when the business environment is safe, it breeds sustainability. When there is insecurity, economic growth cannot be sustained, leading to loss of lives, uncountable job losses, steep strain on business operations, poor revenue and real threats to infrastructure. The findings are consistent with the views of Ajayi et al. (2022), Dada (2011) and Rotimi (2013), who agreed that the major challenges hospitality industries face because of insecurity are low hotel patronage, a decline in occupancy rate and hotel sales, the reduction of salaries, job losses and poor investment. There is no gainsaying that insecurity keeps domestic and foreign investors away, which explains why there is low investment confidence in Nigeria's travel and tourism industry (Ojo et al., 2014).

It is also right to say that many investors and management of the hospitality industry are losing faith in their businesses because of fear of the unknown. This has been worsened by the fact that insecurity in the area seems to have defiled all attempts by the government to curb its spread. It is difficult to say whether the inability to tackle insecurity results from not taking the menace seriously or whether the key stakeholders have failed to cooperate and adopt a pragmatic approach. As a result, it is left to the investors, management, and hotel owners to decide whether to close their businesses and relocate elsewhere or partner with security personnel to fight the scourge of insecurity. Rotimi et al. (2013) commented earlier that the security situation in different parts of Nigeria is challenging for hoteliers. Reduced customer patronage leads to dwindling hotel services, inability to pay wages and sometimes, job losses. The prevalent nature of insecurity in Nnewi calls for serious attention to save jobs, lives and the regional economy. To this end, the study also found that most hotels have adopted improved security measures to maintain the home-away-from-home tag of hotels and ensure a safe and secure environment for guests during their occupancy (consistent with Chauhan et al., 2018). This could mean that the hoteliers

understood the importance of ensuring the well-being of their customers. It remains to be seen whether the government will assist the private sector in the area.

Concerning the possible solutions to address the impacts of insecurity in the hospitality industry in Nnewi, the findings showed that the management of the hotels had devised several means to remain in business. This is consistent with the view of Hymanson (2011), who suggested that guest profiling is a core security measure that protects hotels worldwide. The author added that guests making hotel reservations are faceless and nameless until they register their details with the receptionists. Consistent with our findings, Chauhan et al. (2018) commented that using CCTVs in hotels helps monitor unwanted movements within the hotel premises. CCTVs are placed at access points such as the front entrance, car parks, and rear entrances. It restricts the movements of intruders and records events that may or may not be helpful for any impending investigation. In conformity with this study, Chauhan et al. (2018) also highlighted using control identification passes, including smart cards for hotel guests to access their rooms and identification passes for staff to access the hotel's premises. Whilst these measures were identified as possible ways to curb insecurity in the study area, it suffices to say that the management of the hotels and hospitality associations must work closely with the government security agencies and local security networks to find a lasting and more pragmatic solution to the menace. We argue that a more holistic and comprehensive approach to fighting insecurity would help boost the hospitality industry's image in the area more than each hotel can independently achieve. To this end, collaboration between security personnel at different levels is needed now more than ever.

This research also confirmed that using theory is possible in research conducted in Nigeria. Concerning SDT, it suffices to say that a minor problem can lead to severe outcomes, which entails that insecurity in its earlier form should be handled adequately and effectively. Escalation of insecurity, if not handled properly, might result in losing lives, misplacing livelihood and damaging properties. It produces anxiety and creates instability in people's lives and daily routines. Based on the theory's assumptions, insecurity affects the well-being of individuals and business operations. A crisis can lead to losing traditional routines and attitudes, affecting individuals' mental health, behaviour and social relationships. This research showed that insecurity in the study area did not just happen overnight; it erupted due to unsettled dialogue between the government and the residents of the Southeastern region. This has given rise to the compulsory sit-at-home, killing of defaulters, kidnapping, banditry and chaos. Until all the aggrieved parties come to the discussion table to find a lasting solution, curbing insecurity might not be possible anytime soon, which indirectly might mean the decimation of the hospitality industry in the area.

Conclusion

The discussions in this paper have shown that insecurity in the hospitality industry affects the arrival of visitors and the tendency to seek accommodation in Nnewi. This is because tourism involves movement from one place to another, meaning that tourists expect the protection of their lives and properties. Whilst the hospitality industry is vital in developing tourism and contributing to the economy, it is still grappling with insecurity in Nnewi. Insecurity, a key issue in the hospitality industry, has manifested drastically and has severe negative impacts, meaning it cannot be taken for granted anymore. Thus, designing and implementing measures to reduce crime and create a safe and serene tourist environment is necessary. The hospitality industry has always created a home-away-from-home environment for tourists and guests while ensuring their pleasure and leisure experiences. The industry thrives in an atmosphere of peace, while insecurity affects both the host settlement and the tourists. It leaves more of an imprint on the host community, creating an avenue for economic dislocation and loss. This is seen in the case of Nnewi, where the livelihood of the indigenes, their business, sales and movements have been grossly affected. This has degenerated to the extent of loss of lives and a tendency to migrate to other safer areas.

As a way out of the socio-economic doldrums accelerated by insecurity in the study area, the government and the hospitality industry have beefed up security measures to tackle and checkmate insecurity (even though much remains to be desired). This entails reinforcing themselves with modern-day detecting and combating equipment, introducing innovative ways of registering guests and employing able-bodied security personnel to ensure a peaceful and sustainable environment for businesses to thrive. That said, there is still an opportunity to do more to end the current insecurity situation in the area. Achieving this will require serious partnership between the public and private sectors in the area to work together, adopt pragmatic approaches and communicate constantly to help fight insecurity. Until this happens, it suffices to say that the hospitality industry in Nnewi might continue to grapple with the challenges of insecurity.

Since this paper focused only on selected hotels in Nnewi town, the findings might not reflect the views of staff in other hotels in the town or elsewhere. Therefore, future researchers can explore other towns in Anambra State or other states in the Southeastern region to help understand what is obtained elsewhere. It will also be beneficial for more studies to explore the perceptions of visitors in the hotels in the study area and know what they think about the impacts of insecurity on their travel. Most importantly, seeing more researchers employ other theories to ground their study will be interesting. Theories such as chaos theory, routine activity theory, crime pattern theory and defensible space theory could perfectly lend themselves to the topic area.

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