



## STRATEGIC SAFETY AND SECURITY DECISIONS AND CONSUMER PATRONAGE OF HOTELS IN CROSS RIVER STATE

Frederick Offiong Bassey<sup>1</sup>, Vivian Arrey Mbaze-Ebock<sup>1</sup>, and Hodo Anna Eko<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Marketing  
University of Calabar, Calabar

**Corresponding Author:** fredhakins@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

Safety and security are critical factors tourists consider when choosing a destination and selecting a hotel. The study investigates security and safety on patronage of hotels in Cross River State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select sample for the study. Data were obtained from customers of selected hotels in Calabar. The results of the analysis reveal that safety concerns have significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State. It was also revealed that availability of CCTV and video surveillance and lifeguards at strategic locations significantly affect consumers' patronage of hotels in Cross River State. On the other hand, safety variables such as availability of clearly marked emergency exits, and stairways, as well as availability of hotel clinics do not significantly affect consumers' patronage of hotels in Cross River State. However, security variable was controversial in the study as it revealed that the security constructs examined which included knowledgeable staff, availability of walkie-talkies, use of electronic key cards and ID cards worn by employees did not significantly affect patronage of hotels in Cross River State. Meanwhile, for the model to show a statistical significance, it may be inferred that the constructs when merged together may significantly influence consumers' patronage of hotels, rather than when they are examined individually. It was therefore recommended that hotel managers in the state should ensure that all times functional CCTVs and video surveillance are installed at strategic points of the hotel as well as lifeguards on standby at the pools. These shall improve the customers' perception towards the hotel safety consciousness. In order to ensure security, the management of hotels should ensure that all the security attributes examined (, knowledgeable staff, ID cards worn by employees, use of electronic key cards and availability of walkie-talkies) are in place and are functional conditions. Finally, there should be routine checks on these attributes by the hotel security personnel.

**Keywords:** Security, safety, patronage, destination,

**JEL:** Z300, Z320, Z330

### INTRODUCTION

Essentially, safety and security are key factors tourists consider when choosing a destination and selecting a hotel. Farina (2015) opined that consideration in the choice of destination or hotel protected from risks and hazards. In the tourism sector, safety and security are indispensable issues and have gained greater importance in the last two decades. Unfortunately, the hotel and tourism sectors are highly vulnerable in terms of safety and security threats. These threats are frequently in the forms of crimes, terrorism, natural disasters, health risks and man-made dangers, to name a few. The demand to devise more potent strategies to avert and/or mitigate their detrimental effects on hotel enterprises and the broader community is increased in light of these challenges. In order to become more difficult targets for threats and hazards, hotels would be wise to update their safety and security procedures and infrastructure (Gill, Moon, Seaman & Turbin, 2002). The largest



problem most hotels have is offering lodging and recreational areas without sacrificing security. Reaching these objectives calls for a multipronged strategy that begins with training new hires and educating them on safety and security concerns. Additionally, management needs to regularly enforce established security protocols, like limiting access to hotel property to registered guests only. Security and safety are important because

In the last two decades, safety and security have received greater attention due to frequency of alerts on terrorist attacks at different parts of the world. In Nigeria, especially in the Northern region there has been increased attacks of Boko Haram, while in the south, kidnapping and other negative vices. Unarguably, safety and security are and have always been major conditions for traveling and staying at a destination. Accordingly, studies have shown that due to increase of threats, the level of outbound and inbound tourists have reduced drastically. Thus, the problem of the study is to examine the increasing rate of safety and security threats in recent years, which negatively affect the tourism and hospitality industry on a regular basis. Thus, this study seeks to investigate the effect of these threats on customer patronage of hotels in Cross River State.

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. investigate the effect of safety concerns on patronage of hotels in Cross River State,
- ii. ascertain how security concerns affect patronage of hotels in Cross River State.

The hypotheses for this study from the objectives are:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Safety concerns do not have significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant effect of security concerns on patronage of hotels in Cross River State.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Safety and security

Enz (2009), asserts that safety is the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk or injury; whereas security is the state of being free from danger or threats. In tourism literature, the terms “safety and security” are usually used interchangeably as twin concepts. In the hotel context, safety refers to protecting employees and customers within hotel property from potential injury or death. Whereas, security goes beyond protecting employees and guests, to include preserving guests’ possessions and hotel properties. In other words, safety relates to human life while security deals with guests’ and hotels’ assets. Thus safety issues such as the effects of accidents, hazardous materials, and fire, whereas security involves such matter as theft and violent crime. Hence, safety and security for this study focus on the protection of guests, employees and hotels’ properties

According to International Hotel and Restaurant Association (1995) safety and security concern in the hotel industry are categorized into micro and macro forces.

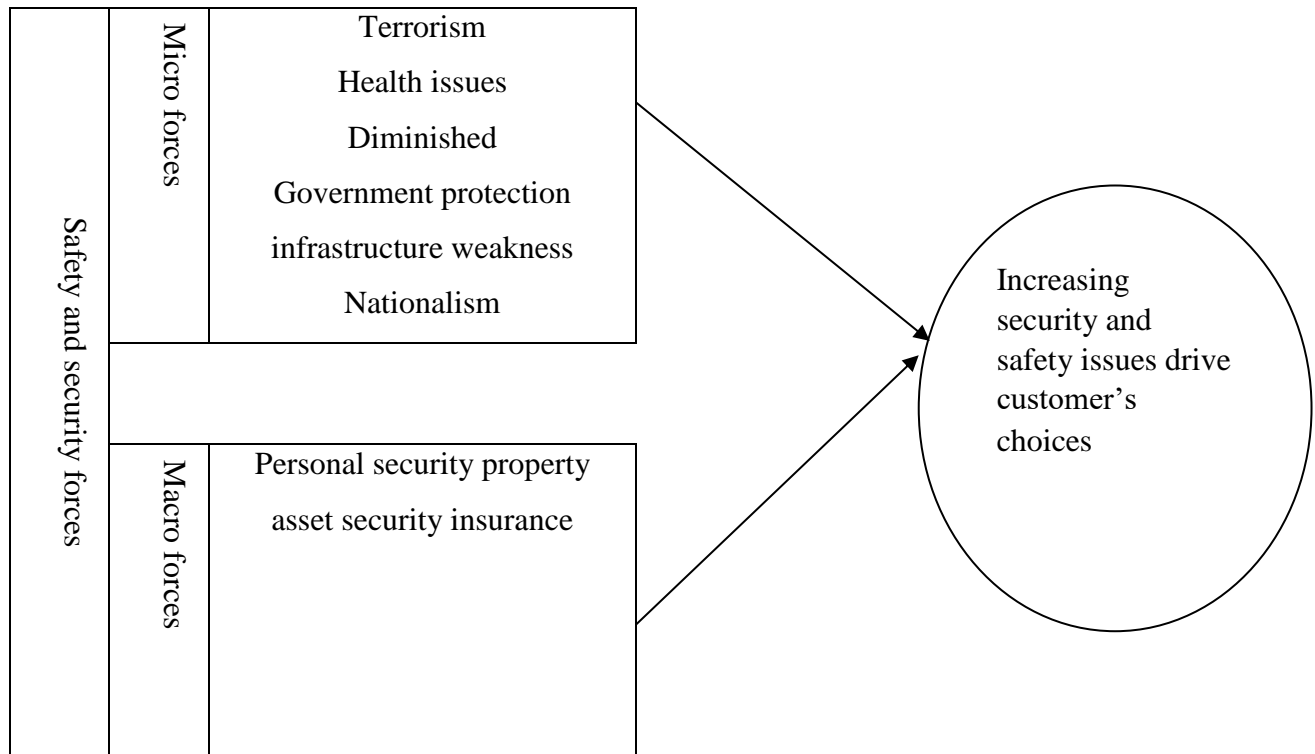


Figure 1: Safety and security in the multinational hotel industry.

Source: Richichamurat (2013)

Security factors that are malevolent to the tourism industry include; crime, terrorism, war and civil/political turmoils. Safety, on the other hand, leans more towards health, accident, natural disaster and other non-human induced incidences. Nevertheless, as an effect of globalization, the nature of tourism security has change significant from traditional issues of crime, terrorism, political stability and national security to include health, social and environmental issues (Masfeld & Pizam 2006; Boakye, 2012).

Safety and security are basically synonymous and their difference is relatively thin and not remarkable as both are conditions of protecting from hazards, threats as well creating safe/secure conditions (Farma, 2015).

Table 1: Difference between safety and security

Causes	Security	Safety
Causes	An incident is most often a result of one person or a group’s will.	An incident is most often a result of human behavior in combination with the environment.
Causes	Often planned actions	Often unplanned.
Causes	Criminal acts	Criminal acts (working environment act)
Causes	Mainly malicious acts	Seldom, if, ever, malicious.
Causes	Mainly deliberate act with a wish of a wanted output/consequence of the act.	Mainly deliberate acts without a wish of a wanted output and accidental incidents.
Threat/hazard	External and internal human threats.	Internal human threats.
Threats/hazard	Threats are not always observable, tangible and proximate.	Hazards are observable, tangible and proximate.
Loss	Mainly related to physical assets and information.	Related to human injuries/death and reliability of industrial assets.
Surroundings	Reflects the state of society through its structures, economic situation, law-abidingness and moral.	Includes physical and environmental conditions-not only humans and society.

Source: Ghazi (2015)

Impact of safety and security incidences on the hotel industry.

Safety and security may be determined more approximately by what does not happen, rather than what happened (Sennewald, 2003). However, their impact could be measured based on destination and psychological effects on the tourists’ behavior.

### Impact safety and security on destination

The availability of safety and security adds value to an organization by aggressively seeking cost reduction initiatives. Security managers may cut costs through entrepreneurial ventures and articulation arrangement with other security service providers (Ortmeier, 2005). Similarly, Pizam and Manifold (2006), indicated that it does not matter by the kind of crisis a tourist destination is hit; the consequences are definitely not positive and initiates an immediate crash in tourism demand to these areas. However, in 2008, Bolan and Williams argued that consumer choice behavior is intensely shaped by a destination's image and therefore, it should not be underestimated regarding the competition in the market place. In view of the above, these researchers at least have something in common, that is tourists' reactions to a crisis defer extremely, while some may not be as responsive as others to the change of the safety situation and keep on travelling to the respective areas. Others might cancel their vacations or choose alternatives.

### Psychological effect of safety and security on tourist's behavior

Safety and security issues largely affect tourists' decision-making process of the (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). Business travellers' propensity for international destinations is predicted by their reluctance to change, their plans are in response to media coverage of security challenges like natural disasters, terrorism, crime wave, etc. Tourists' level of previous international experience also influences their reaction to insecurity challenges, (Steiner, 2007; Ertuna & Ertuna, 2009). This included keeping a low profile, dressing down, eliminating conspicuous consumption, etc. Also, the risk of insecurity causes tourists to substitute risky destination choices with safer ones. Most tourists are rational consumers and move through the decision-making process by weighing benefits against costs, (Singh, 2015). Once the tourists have decided to travel to a destination which is afterwards affected by a crisis, they might cancel their trip or choose among any alternative destination that offers the same features (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2006). It is important to know that visitors' safety and security are paramount for the hotel business in terms of occupancy, image and financial success.

### Hotel's vulnerability to safety and security threats and hazards

Hotel properties generally present greater vulnerabilities in terms of safety and security threats. These threats include are crimes, terrorism, natural disasters, health and man-made hazards. These threats can be classified into five:

1. Hotels have a long history of being "soft-targets" or easy targets environments for safety and security threats because of factors such as open access round-the-clock, many public and multiple access points parking lots and encounters with strangers and foreigners. Furthermore, it is often difficult to distinguish among guests, legitimate visitors and people who are potential threats. Lastly, building designs and configurations are not security oriented. Many hotel buildings, particularly older ones, may not have been designed with security considerations in mind like no shelter-proof grass, no bomb-proof Kevlar wallpaper, non tamper-resistant doors and windows, (Ghazi, 2015).
2. Balancing security imperatives with guest satisfaction is difficult. Hoteliers find it awkward to maintain the highest possible standards of safety while avoiding being over-intrusive or invading guests' privacy. Safety measures should be done discreetly, by minimizing obvious presence of security.



3. Technology is expensive and always changing. It was widely agreed by security scholars that technology is an invaluable asset which could be used to detect dubious characters or harmful substances and deter criminals. It is therefore important for hotels to be equipped with the latest technologies and have the personnel to utilize same to optimal effect.
4. Many hoteliers likely do nothing to improve their safety and security systems, due to an “it can’t happen here” mentality. Some hotel managers regarded security as a non-revenue-creating, non-productive expense and therefore do not see a need to improve their safety and security systems. Hence, security, if available, often ends up with the least amount of focus, attention and resources needed to adequately address the challenges and risks facing numerous organizations.
5. There is a high turnover rate in security personnel which necessitates maintaining regular training for staff. Security departments are understaffed and plagued with overtime issues. Retirees and the less educated usually formed the bulk of officers and they usually do not display great physical fitness or the best mindset. Moreover, at the helm of the security department is a director of security, who in most cases is unlicensed and exhibits a militaristic disposition and non-customer service approach to dealing with the staff and guests alike (Ghazi, 2015).

The above listed points emphasize that hotels should upgrade their safety and security measures and procedures to make them harder targets against threats and hazards. Thus, it is necessary for hotel’s management to review and revise security measures accordingly.

#### Systems in hotels for safety and security

The physical system to ensure security in a hotel includes the planning and design of the hotel property, access systems to guestrooms and the installation of surveillance equipment (Chiang, 2010).

- a) Hotel planning and design: The design of the hotel including its lighting and fixtures, have much impact on its security systems. The design of the hotel can cause limitations to the efficient positioning of the CCTV (closed circuit TV) if the building is circular in its design. Therefore, it is recommended that the opinions of the security department or security and not just that of the architect be considered when designing a new hotel or renovating existing ones.
- b) Access system to guestroom: Restricting access to guestroom is a key element in ensuring security in a hotel. The range from lock and key to online key cards. The electronic access system is card based, i.e. instead of using an ordinary key, a guest now uses a plastic card to unlock a door. The main advantage of the electronic system is that each entry to a room is read and recorded. This means that with the key card systems, it is possible for a hotel to trace the specific time a person enters the room on a particular day. This therefore serves as a deterrent to attempts of unauthorized entries (Chiang, 2010).
- c) Security equipment: In ensuring the safety of the guests, hotels install various types of security equipment on their premises. These include CCTV system, safe deposit, panic bolt, crash-bar, etc. The CCTV systems are normally attached to automatic recorder which





can reproduce any frame or picture of the events recorded. The system acts not only as a deterrent against crime, but produces recorded evidence. CCTV cameras are usually located at the following places: lobby, corridors, lifts, staircase, swimming pool, restaurant, cashier's office, front desk, club perimeter, and security check points just to mention a few. All the CCTV systems in hotels should have round the clock recording using time lapse recorders. The safe deposits box is usually located in protected area within the hotel that provides adequate security for its activity. The system allows registered guests to keep relevant possessions safe. Entries to the safe deposit box are usually by means of a key or code-activated locking device. A closed circuit TV is recommended for enclosed rooms in order for someone who is not supposed to be there. Also, the panic bolts which are designed to be easy to open without a key, while inside the building, when a building is occupied. They are designed to remain closed at all times and locked from the outside to ensure safety and security. And, lastly the crash bars which are commonly known as panic exit device. It is a door opening mechanism which allows users to open a door by pushing a bar. The device consists of a spring loaded metal bar which is fixed horizontally to a door that swings in the direction of exit. When the bar is depressed, it activates the mechanism which unlatches the door allowing occupants to leave the building quickly.

#### Security personnel and training

- a. Structure of security department: The structure and reporting levels of the security department in hotels vary slightly. Most hotels maintain their own security department i.e. the security personnel are employees of the hotel. On the other hand, some engage external security firms to provide their security needs. When determining whether it is necessary to maintain an internal security department, the issue of cost versus control prevails. It is basically a management decision and the number of security staff employed depends on the size and layout of the hotel and on the number of potential chief (Chiang, 2010).
- b. Training of security personnel: The person-in-charge of hotel security training is usually the head of the security department, i.e. the chief security officer (CSO). The CSO conducts training courses for the hotel staff according to a security training manual. During the training, the security officers are taught the basic security procedures and theories, how to use various security equipment and handle situation such as a crime that has been committed. The security officers learn how to conduct proper investigations, as well as make arrests. They are instructed about their powers and limitations and made to understand the discipline and professionalism expected from them.
- c. Training of non-security personnel: When training the non-security staff, common crimes in the hotel industry are highlighted and their roles in the prevention of crimes are also emphasized. In some hotels, on-the-job security training forms part of the orientation program for any new staff. On-the job training usually involves the new security officers following their seniors during inspections and observing how they handle security issues. In addition to providing internal training, some hotels also enrol their security and other staff for the various security courses conducted by both public and private security organizations. Some of the areas covered in the training include security operations, basic fire-fighting, first-aid, and security awareness courses (Chiang, 2010).



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### The study area

The study was conducted in Cross River State located in the southern part of Nigeria. The state is known as “Destination Cross River”. It is branded as the warmest African smile. Statistics shows that in the state there are 344 accommodation establishments, 1507 food services firms, 16 recreational centers, 45 arts & craft shops and tour agencies across the 18 Local Government Areas of the State (CRSTB 2013). The destination is endowed with scintillating natural and authentic cultural attractions as well as festivals.

Survey research design was used for data collection and analysis. Data were collected from hotel customers who were lodging at the accommodation establishments as at the time the questionnaires was administered.

The population of the study was basically all customers of standard hotels. However, Transcorp, Axari and Pyramid hotels were selected for the study because of the availability of security and safety facilities.

### Sample design and sampling procedure

A judgmental sampling design was used to select sample elements for the study. The judgmental sampling was used because the number of persons used for the study were drawn from a population of hotel guests who were present as at the time of administering the questionnaire.

### Instrumentation and data collection method

The instrument used for the study drew heavily from the measurement scale used by Ghazi (2015) in a similar study on safety and security measures in hotels. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section ‘A’ contained the demographic variables of respondents. Section ‘B’ contained statements regarding the major construct in the study (security and Safety). The statements were measured across a five-point likert scale.

100 copies of the validated questionnaire were handed over to the front desk officers of selected hotels who further placed them in the rooms of guests and were collected by the house keeping staff. A total of 89 copies of questionnaire were correctly completed and returned.

### Data analysis techniques

Data were organized by the use of the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistic such as frequency distribution was used to summarize and obtain the rating of the guests’ perception and order in the distribution of demographics. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the effect of security and safety on customer patronage.

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Data presentation

Male and female respondents were surveyed during the study, 43 (48.3%) males responded to the survey while 46 (51.7%) females did likewise. The respondents were within the age range of below 30 years to 51 years and above. 15 (16.9%) of the respondents were below 30 years, 26 (29.2%) of them were between 31 to 40years, 31 (34.8%) of them were between 41 to 50 years while 17 (19.1%) were 51 years and above. 15 (16.9%) of the respondents earned income between N10,000



to N40,000, 18 (20.3%) of the earned income between N50,000 to N90,000, 36 (40.4%) of the respondents earned income between N100,000 to N140,000, 10 (11.2%) of the respondents earned income between N150,000 to N190,000 while 10 (11.2%) of the respondents earned between N200,000 to N300,000. This imply that females patronize hotels more than men, majority of the hotel customers are within the age range of 41 to 50 years and most of them earn income between N100,000 to N140,000.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	43	48.3
Female	46	51.7
<b>Age:</b>		
Below 30 years	15	16.9
31-40 years	26	29.2
41-50 years	31	34.8
51 and above	17	19.1
<b>Income: (Monthly)</b>		
N10,000 – N40,000	15	16.9
N50,000- N90,000	18	20.3
N100,000 – N140,000	36	40.4
N150,000 – N190,000	10	11.2
N 200,000 – N300,000	10	11.2

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Test of hypotheses

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Safety concerns does not have a significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State

Table 3: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.399 <sup>a</sup>	.159	.115	2.90439

a. Predictors: (Constant), CCTV, Emergency exit, Clinic, Lifeguards

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	122.664	4	30.666	3.635	.009 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	649.531	77	8.435		
	Total	772.195	81			

a. Dependent Variable: Patronage

b. Predictors: (Constant), CCTV, Emergency exit, Clinic, Lifeguards

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.221	1.609		6.351	.000
	CCTV	.593	.304	.236	1.952	.055
	Emergency exit	.225	.370	.080	.608	.545
	Clinic	-.248	.374	-.089	-.662	.510
	Lifeguards	.880	.404	.264	2.179	.032

a. Dependent Variable: Patronage

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 6: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.346 <sup>a</sup>	.120	.073	2.98227

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledgeable staff, Walkie-Talkies,

Electronic Key cards, ID cards

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 7: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	91.939	4	22.985	2.584	.044 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	675.938	76	8.894		
	Total	767.877	80			

a. Dependent Variable: Patronage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledgeable staff, Walkie-Talkies, Electronic Key cards, ID cards

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Table 8: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.243	2.202		4.198	.000
	Knowledgeable staff	.963	.543	.246	1.774	.080
	Walkie-Talkies	.035	.518	.009	.068	.946
	Electronic Key cards	.161	.464	.044	.347	.730
	ID cards	.331	.378	.114	.875	.384

a. Dependent Variable: Patronage

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Interpretation of results for Hypothesis Two (2):

The result in Tables 9, 10 and 11 show the multiple regression analysis of the effect of Security concerns on patronage of hotels in Cross River State. With r-value of 0.346 (34.6%) and a probability value (0.044) less than 0.05 significance level, it reveals that security concerns has a significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State. Overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable, although it is not a very good fit for the data ( $F = 2.584$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This conclusion is drawn because the model reveals that all the security variables had insignificant effects on consumers' patronage; this is evident as Table 11 reveals that knowledgeable staff ( $p = 0.080$ ), availability of walkie-talkies ( $p = 0.946$ ), use of electronic key cards ( $p = 0.730$ ) and ID cards worn by employees ( $p = 0.384$ ) all have p-value greater than 0.05 which show that they do not significantly affect patronage of hotels in CRS.



Also, from the beta column it is seen that knowledgeable staff made the strongest contribution to explaining the dependent variable (Beta = 0.246), followed by ID cards worn by employees (Beta = 0.114), and then use of electronic key cards (Beta = 0.044), while availability of walkie-talkies made the least and most insignificant contribution in explaining the dependent variable (Beta = 0.009).

Overall, since the model suggest a statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), it safe to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which says that: Security concerns have a significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State.

#### Discussion of findings

The result of the analysis reveals that safety concerns have a significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State. The study revealed that availability of CCTV and video surveillance and lifeguards at the pool significantly affect consumers' patronage of hotels in Cross River State. On the other hand, safety variables such as availability of clearly marked emergency exits and stairways and availability of hotel clinics do not significantly affect consumers' patronage of hotels in Cross River State. According to Bolan and Williams (2008), consumer choice behavior is intensely shaped by a destination's image and therefore, features such as safety should not be underestimated regarding the competition in the market place. They further added that tourists' reactions to a crisis defer extremely, while some may not be as responsive as other to the change of the safety situation and keep on travelling to the respective areas. Other might cancel their vacations or choose alternative destinations.

Finally, the analysis reveals that security concerns have a significant effect on patronage of hotels in Cross River State. However, this variable was controversial in the study as it revealed that the security constructs examined which included knowledgeable staff, availability of walkie-talkies, use of electronic key cards and ID cards worn by employees did not significantly affect patronage of hotels in Cross River State. Meanwhile, for the model to show a statistical significance, it may be inferred that the constructs when merged together may significantly influence consumers' patronage of hotels, rather than when they are examined individually. Security issues affect the decision-making process of the tourist. Business travellers' propensity for international destinations is predicted by their reluctance to change their plans in response to media coverage of security challenges like natural disasters terrorism, crime wave, etc. Tourists' level of previous international experience also influences their reaction to insecurity challenges, (Steiner, 2007; Ertuna & Ertuna, 2009). Pizam and Mansfeld, (2006) added that once the tourists have decided to travel to a destination which is afterwards affected by a crisis, they might cancel their trip or choose among any alternative destinations that offers the same features or similar facilities.

#### CONCLUSION

This study specifically assessed certain safety and security variables such as availability of lifeguards at the pool, CCTV and video surveillance, hotel clinics, clearly marked emergency exits and stairways, knowledgeable staff, ID cards worn by employees, use of electronic key cards and walkie-talkies. Results indicated that each of these measures significantly affect consumers' patronage of hotels in Cross River State. When consumers perceive that the hotel establishment is safety and security conscious, consumer would be more inclined to patronize that hotel. If the safety and security measures are not perceived positively by the consumer, they will likely avoid



patronizing they hotel and may also discourage others from patronizing it as well. Hence, safety and security affect satisfaction and satisfaction directly affect the positive behavioural intentions, which includes patronage.

### Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Hotel managers in CRS should ensure that CCTVs and video surveillance are installed at strategic locations of the hotel. They should also ensure that these devices are functional at all times. There should also be lifeguards on standby at the pools at the hotel. This will improve the customers' perception towards the hotel safety consciousness.
- ii. In improving the state of security at the hotel, the management of the hotel should ensure that all the security attributes examined (, knowledgeable staff, ID cards worn by employees, use of electronic key cards and availability of walkie-talkies) are in place and in functional conditions. There should be routine checks on these attributes by the hotel security personnel.

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