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Prospects and Challenges of the Hospitality Industries in Nigeria during Electioneering Processes: A Case Study of Ekiti 2018 Gubernatorial Poll

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Abstract:

The business of the hospitality industry in Nigeria is receiving greater attention due to the lucrateness of the business. However, as good as the business is, it is found out to have encountered some challenges despite playing vital roles especially during democratic electioneering campaign as it affects good governance in the country.

The study however finds out that due to the desperation on the part of the politicians and the desire to win elections at all cost, the former has resorted to using hospitality industries as hideouts to strategize its planned desires at winning elections. Be that as it may, it is discovered that the business is characterized with evil activities that have become so rampant in most states of the federation for which Ekiti State is not excluded. Most often, some criminal activities such as the ballot snatching, destruction of election materials, killing of ad hoc and permanent staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), announcement of poll results under duress, disappearance of the returning officers with election results, over militarization of the poll, the issue of the fake military officers, assassination and killings are always found out to have been perfectly planned in the so called hospitality industries. In view of this, the study examines the politics behind the establishment of the hospitality industries with a view to offering enduring and lasting solutions to all the identified challenges herein.

The study adopts both primary and secondary sources of data collection to accomplish its objectives. The study therefore concludes that for credible and reliable hospitality industry to thrive in Nigeria, those involved in shedding business of the hospitality industries must desist and government must ensure that standing rules and regulations are formulated by the legislators to apprehend anyone found disobeying the laws.

Keywords: Hospitality industry, elections crisis and violence, socio-political and economic implications

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

The hospitality industries have become renowned business in Nigeria and indeed in Ekiti State to the extent that virtually everybody now seems to be longing for it. The hospitality industry is a broad group of businesses that provide services to customers. It focuses on the satisfaction of customers and providing specific experiences for them (*Savannah, 2003*). The hospitality industry is unique because it relies so heavily on discretionary income and free time. In this study, attention is paid to the challenges, prospects of the hospitality industry and levels of service provided, as well as economics of the industry during electioneering campaign In Nigeria with special focus on Ekiti politics,

As earlier indicated, the business of the hospitality industry is a unique one that virtually every prospective business individual is gunning for. However, the recent dastardly activities of the men under world have frustrated the good intention of the intended investors in the business of the hospitality industry. Hence, the challenges encountered in doing the business. For instance, plotting of serial assassinations and killings are mostly attributed to hospitality industries where those elements have been employing as hideouts to channel their evil plans and purposes. Besides, unholy and anti-social programs (like stripper's dance and prostitution) usually held by some hospitality industries at times are pointers to the challenges faced in the business. Besides, it has been found out that due to the desperation of some people especially the politicians who are having the desire to win elections at all cost; have resorted to using hospitality industries as hideouts to strategize their planned desires at winning elections.

Most often than not, some criminal activities such as the ballot snatching, destruction of election materials, killing of ad hoc and permanent staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), announcement of poll results under duress, disappearance of the returning officers with election results, over militarization of the poll, the issue of the fake

military officers, assassination and killings are always found out to have been perfectly masterminded in the so called hospitality industries. However, this study will unravel the panaceas that could be adopted to address the ugly situation of the hospitality industries globally and in particular as it is in Ekiti State.

Be that as it may, the study sets to answer the following questions among others: What is hospitality industry? To what extent have the challenges of the hospitality industries affected Ekiti State? What would be the rate of development of the socio-political and economic situation of Ekiti State without hospitality industries? In view of this, the main agendas of the study are to: assess the meaning of the hospitality industry; determine the extent of challenges currently confronting the hospitality industries affected Ekiti State and examine the rate of development of the socio-political and economic situation of Ekiti State without hospitality industries. Meanwhile, this study is however predicated on the following assumptions: that as long as the club arena, resting rooms and conference centre are structured together in the same building, the definition of hospitality industry remains utopian; that the extent of challenges confronting the hospitality industries in Ekiti State currently is a product of bad governance and that the rate of development of the socio-political and economic situation of Ekiti State is subject mostly to the growth of hospitality industries in the State.

In this study, attention is paid to the challenges, prospects of the hospitality industry, levels of service provided as well as economics of the industry in Nigeria with special focus on Ekiti State.

2. Prospects of the Hospitality Industries (Business) Worldwide

First and foremost, there are earnest returns on investment as early as possible if professionals are involved at the inception (Martin, 2017). One of fundamental prospects of the hospitality industry or business is the fact that the returns on every investment is quickly made possible due to the fact that the professionals like the Economists, Accountants or Engineers are involved. This enables the business to be more lucrative in whatever area or environment that it has been established. Also, the opportunity to build a professional career just like in any other professions is another prospect that is embedded in the business of hospitality industry globally.

In addition, the entry requirement for any intending investor is not difficult (Martin, 2017). Equally, there is room for on the job training of staff to become professional in their field of endeavors. And therefore, business expansion is made possible within the given short period of time where environment is conducive and favorable.

Be that as may, another prospect is meeting new individuals, personalities and possibly having international connections, an example was that of the former Chief of Protocols to Governor Kayode Fayemi in the first regime who accidentally ran into Hon. Tade Aluko at the Lagos Airport Hotel. (Thisday, 6th Feb, 2019).

It affords the owners sometimes the opportunity to establish hospitality School with government approved certificate. Example is Esparta Hotel, Lagos State, Nigeria. Besides, there is unlimited access to loan facilities from banks and other finance houses because the hotel buildings in most cases are used as collateral securities (CBN, 2010).

Hospitality industries serve as tourist centres where guests from other part of the world can visit e.g. the following hospitality industries are in located Ekiti State viz: Ikogosi Warm Spring, Pathfinder Hotel, Midals Hotel, and Ade Super Hotel in Akure Ondo State. In furtherance, it is a revenue centre for the government by virtue of collection of taxes. It should be emphasized that most often than not the establishment of the hospitality industries provides a revenue base for the government be it at the Federal, State, or Local level. The philosophy behind the rates and tax collection is that social amenities can be provided for good governance and the consumption of the masses.

At this juncture, the establishment of the hospitality industries creates employment opportunities to our teeming graduates. It is disheartening to note that majority of the graduates nowadays have always been roaming the streets without any jobs after years of their graduation from various institutions of learning. After from this, scores of armed robbery gangs mostly apprehended are found out to be graduates from higher institutions. (Premium Times, 2019). However, with the establishment of the hospitality industries, the tendency to be gainfully employed is there. For instance, professionals like the Accountants, Economists, administrative officers and Engineers are all employed nowadays by the owners of such hotels or hospitality industries with a view to facilitate their businesses

3. Encountered Challenges in the Management of the Hospitality Industries Globally

Like every other system, in the management of hotels; challenges are faced. Some of the problems usually encountered are discussed thus: Firstly, multiple taxation by the government is a major challenge. The issue of collection of taxes remains an albatross (Adebowale and Tolulope, 2019). The truth of the matter is that majority of the hospitality industries are owned by individuals and government find it so comfortable to place various taxes on them like excise tax, import duty tax, direct and indirect tax. Besides, there are still other levels introduced by the government. Secondly, Owners unable to separate ownership from the administration of the business. Too much influence and over domineering. It is important to note that the owner do not allow staffs employed to carry the day activities of the business professionally. Most professional advice/advice given are ignored. An example is when a disciplinary measure is to be taken concerning a staff due to misconduct and professional lapses. The owner may decide to cancel the disciplinary measures especially when there is an amorous relationship between the owner and the staff involved. This affects the business negatively. More so, once competent staff are employed to carry out the hotel business. The owner does not give the staff independence to run the business thus bringing in unprofessional advice which the staff might be compelled to adhere to and which may not be suitable for the growth of the business. Another fundamental challenge confronting the hospitality industries is what could be referred to as lack of trust of employees by hotels' owners. Or the harassment of hotel employees by customers. The employees seem not to be trusted by owner or board of trustee and most often, this has been found out to affecting the business negatively. Closely related to this is the concept of abuse of

manpower (Martin,2017). It is also found out that agreed payment as per working hours is not fulfilled and public holidays are not recognized as the manpower is made to work laboriously.

Poor remuneration to staff is another albatross facing the proficiency, effectiveness and efficiency of the hospitality industries globally. Welfare package and conditions of service are very central to development in human endeavor. Majority of the hospitality industries are on the verge of collapse mostly due to poor welfare package and conditions of service. According to (Martin,2017): Employee welfare entails everything from services, facilities and benefits that are provided or done by an employer for the advantage or comfort of an employee. It is undertaken in order to motivate employees and raise the productivity levels. This consequently results in lack of patronage and total breakup of the industry sometimes. Indeed, poor economic system affects the running of the hospitality industries (business). Lack of security in the land does affect the sustainability of the business, every prospective customer wants the best in term of security and where this is lacking, such business of the hospitality industries can hardly grow. It is also interesting to note that the hospitality industries provide a safe hideout for criminals to perpetrate evil. For example, the recent arrest of a serial killer in Port Harcourt who in his confessional statement has killed up to 15 ladies. See thus:

"Last week, David-West had claimed that he killed seven women in Lagos, Rivers and Imo states but according to Nnamdi Omoni, Police Public Relations Officer, Rivers State, he has now confessed that he killed 15 women across 7 states. Nnamdi Omoni, speaking to newsmen yesterday, said that David- West killed one person each in Abia, Edo, Ibadan in Oyo, Owerri in Imo, Ikeja in Lagos where the act started two months ago and nine in Port Harcourt, Rivers, The Guardian reports. David-West was apprehended while trying to escape the intense heat his actions were generating in the state after a CCTV footage of him in a hotel emerged and went viral on social media.

He further revealed that he was on his way to Uyo, Akwa Ibom State apparently to continue in the evil act, before the viral CCTV video of his last attack got in his way, making his arrest easy for the police." (WithinNigeria,2019).

In furtherance, Governor Wike submits thus: "Some hotels in Rivers State are hideouts for kidnappers. You don't report who lodge in your hotels. You just do whatever you want to do. We are very serious now and crime must come down by the grace of God. Sometimes, they kidnap people and bring them to your hotels. Be sure you would be caught; if you are one of them, too bad," the governor stressed.

In addition, some hotels are involved in immoral activities like commercial sex business, strippers dance and prostitution which corrupt the societal values. (Sarah 2016) highlights as follows:

"The commercial sex business is a multibillion-dollar industry for those that partake in it. It includes escort services, outcall services, prostitution tourism, streetwalkers, strippers, adult/child pornography, and video/internet pornography. These different professions seem to cover three main areas – pornography, prostitution, and striptease. There seems to be the most intersection between prostitution and striptease with many sex workers entering the industry through these two areas"

Cost of hotel maintenance is very high. Maintenance is paramount to the sustainability of the hotel business; constant maintenance is needed which requires money. Sometimes one runs the business on credit facilities while debtors fail to pay, it results in bad debt. This is not good for the smooth administration of the business.

Poor electricity, because of irregular power supply running hotels needs the procurement of stable and working generators to power business. lack of good roads and basic infrastructural facilities are problematic to the growth of the business. Lack of government patronage usually affect the sales. In some cases technological advancement in hospitality industry make owners to continue to change designs and property (Savannah, 2003).

4. Hospitality Industry and the Case Study of Ekiti 2018 Gubernatorial Poll: Findings and Discussions

This study finds out that during the gubernatorial poll of the 2018 in Ekiti State, there were lots of misgivings all over the place. It was widely rumored that electoral materials were kept in some designated hotels in the state. Besides, some alleged that certain political gladiators had imported thugs from the neighboring states and were kept in some unidentified joints and hotels in Ekiti State. The study finds out that a particular political office holder who hails from Ebira ethnic group was hiding self in a hotel in Ado Ekiti from where he was seen distributing money to the electorates even on the day of election.

Be that as it may, a situation whereby the hotels are used as storage of election materials call for caution because the political gladiators would make nonsense of such arrangement by sponsoring political thugs to cause havoc in order to cart away the materials. The implication of this is that joints, hotels or any other hospitality industries belong to the public and therefore should not be used for whatever political arrangements

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