

The Effect of COVID-19 on Tourism and the Hospitality Industry in Nsukka, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Several nations have imposed travel restrictions to stop the spread of the pandemic. Restrictions placed on the movement of persons, social distancing and the general perception about the pandemic, made tourism not a choice during the period. This situation was also exacerbated by further closure of hotels, attractions, events, eateries and other agents that promotes the sector. In order to keep safe, people do not want to lodge or stay in hotels. The implication for the nation's economy is inestimable especially its direct implications on too many people employed in the tourism value chain. Tourism attractions of Nsukka were x-rayed. Seven hotels at Nsukka were sampled for the study. Qualitative method was used for data collection, which was analyzed descriptively. This paper also accessed information from the social media, newspapers and journal publications on related themes in order to elicit views on the subject matter. The findings revealed that COVID-19 has caused revenue loss, unemployment, and decrease in revenue to the government. The researcher's recommends disaster preparedness and business continuity plan in order to offset the damage caused by this outbreak and to prevent future damage.

Keywords: Hospitality Industry, Tourism Industry, Travel Restriction, Social Distancing, Nsukka

I. INTRODUCTION

In the quest to pursue the idea of making the world a global village there bound to be tourism. Justifying this view further, Khazami et al., (2020, p. 1) notes that tourism ordinarily is the main reason for human movement. Hence, the movement of persons for tourism is strongly built around the structure provided by the hospitality industry. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China, in November 2019 and its global spread starting in February 2020, a new threat to the global tourism and hospitality industries has emerged. There is a slump demand among travelers as the entire economic sector was in a standstill state. International flights are prohibited, leaving job seekers stranded at home and migrant workers stranded abroad (Solomon, 2020). Many countries that rely significantly on tourism are suffering a severe economic setback. Number of passengers has decreased, trips and public events canceled or postponed (Adel et al., 2020, p. 121). This made people to lose their jobs, since there is a decrease in revenue in hospitality and tourism industry. World Travel and Tourism Council ascertain that Covid 19 epidemic might put up to 75 million jobs at danger (Adel et al., 2020, p. 121). As a result, millions of previously stable-income employees are at risk of falling into poverty, necessitating immediate action (ILO, 2020). On March 30, 2020, the Nigerian government enacted and enforced social distancing regulations and movement restrictions. COVID-19 spreads in the air via respiratory droplets emitted by laughing, coughing, or sneezing. These contacts, as well as the necessity to touch surfaces, could put you or your clients at risk of contracting the virus. For Adel et al., (2020), the best way to avoid and slow down transmission is to be well-informed about the COVID-19 virus. Regularly washing your hands or rubbing your hands with sanitizer and avoiding touching your face protects you and others from infection. Apart from these measures, the health organizations advice the use of nose mask too.

Closing borders, hotels and hospitality industries led to the decline in travels especially in the cancellation of about 40% to 50% hotel reservation Oruonye & Ahmed (2020, p. 32). In many Nigeria, the closure of hotels to ensure that the spread of Covid-19 is curtailed led to untold hardship especially as hotel owners were unable to pay full salaries, some paid half salaries and some have no money to pay at all. There was also the socio-economic implication of this development to food supply chains from farmers and hunters whose business was to sell food and meat to hotel owners. Interacting with coworkers and clients, as well as work surfaces, is vital. There must be communication between the workers and customers.

Two hotels in River State were demolished in a recent incident. These were Edemete Hotel and Prodest Home. They have been accused of violating lockdown procedures by Nyesom Wike, the state's governor, who led to the demolition of the hotels. There is, however, no proof that anyone in either of the wrecked hotels had COVID-19 (Orjinmo, 2020). In his assumption he said that people who have tested positive for the virus have been discovered in hotels throughout the state. For residents of the state, the governor is going against the directions of his executive order. Adeshokan (2020) asserts that the executive order that empowers him to demolish the hotels is unconstitutional and undemocratic.

Ozili (2020, p. 3) notes that the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria was severe due to weak institutions that failed to respond to the pandemic and a lack of comprehensive social welfare programs. This development was taking place when there was lockdown of schools and other businesses. With the children at home and in the absence of any functional support system from the government, workers in the tourism and hotel sector suffered immensely in terms of rising to the challenges of feeding their respective families.

Methodology adopted is qualitative. The staff and managers of each hotel were interviewed. The staff selected for the interview is those that have the managerial knowledge of the hotel at least for three years. The custodians of cultures like the President General of the communities visited were interviewed on tourist attractions and potentials in their domain. The paper also accessed newspapers and journal publications on related themes in order to elicit information on the subject matter. Seven hotels and some tourist's attractions at Nsukka were used as case studies. The specific analysis of this paper after this introductory segment will follow the under listed themes: rationale for the study, brief description of the study area, review of related literature, the effect of COVID-19 epidemic on the hospitality and tourism industries in Nsukka, as well as pandemic's consequences for Nigeria's tourism recovery and conclusion.

II. METHOD

Methodology adopted is qualitative using un-structured in-depth interviews. The staff and managers of each hotel were interviewed. The staff selected for the interview is those that have the managerial knowledge of the hotel at least for three years. The custodians of cultures like the President General of the communities visited were interviewed on tourist attractions and potentials in their domain. The paper also accessed newspapers and journal publications on related themes in order to elicit information on the subject matter. Seven hotels and tourist's attractions at Nsukka were used as case studies.

III. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

There are articles or papers on effects of COVID-19 on the hospitality and tourism industry. Those articles are theoretical in nature and none has addressed its effect on hospitality and tourism industry in Nsukka. This study fills this gap of knowledge. Of example is a paper written by Ofordu (2020), "COVID-19 Impact on the Hospitality Industry in Nigeria" He asserts that "hotels, restaurants, clubs, tourism, aviation, theme parks, cinemas, outdoor catering are all affected by the corona virus outbreak" he maintained that the effect is more than Ebola and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreaks. The knowledge obtained from this study help people to manage themselves psychologically and financially during such health hazard and economic meltdown. People should follow the National Center for Disease Control's health recommendations in this regard. The product of this research is of great important to the government and policy makers by adopting a policy that will help to sustain the management of hospitality and tourism industry during such health hazard.

IV. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF NSUKKA

Nsukka is one of the towns in Enugu State. It lies between latitude 6°18 and 7°54 East (Eze, 2011; Ofomata, 1978) Nsukka local government consists of about eighteen local communities namely: Alor-Uno, Anuka, Ede-Oballa, Ibagwa-Ani, Edem, Lejja, Nsukka town, Obimo, Eha-Alumona, Ehandiagu, Ikwoka, Obukpa, Okpa Ligbo, Okpuje, Okwutu, Opi Agu, and Opi Uno (Eze, 2011). Nsukka shares a common boundary to the North with Adoru in Kogi State and Orokam in Benue State, Umurumbge and Nkalagu to the east and the river Niger to the west. In the South West is Umuoka and Egede, in the South is Udi, Ezeagu, and Enugu East Local Government Area respectively (Eze, 2011).

The town is placed on a high zone which lies at about 1200 feet above sea level. There are isolated peaks that range from 1,200 to 1,800 feet (Eze-Uzomaka, 1996). There is generally a mild climate with substantial rainfall during the wet season. The topography of the area presents many interesting natural sceneries such as archaeological sites, streams, depressions, and valleys. The town also has a lot of hills surrounding it. Vegetation of Nsukka is mainly derived savannah belt due to exploitation of wood in the past days for iron production. Six agricultural (economic) belts may be found in Nsukka. IgboAhaba (Aciona bateri is a plant), Uzo-Egu, Igbo Oda, Igbo Ani, Eketekere, and Udunedem are some of the locations (Opata & Asogwa, 2017; Opata, 1997). Land is defined as the supplier and life-sustaining force in these communities, not just because of its economic value.

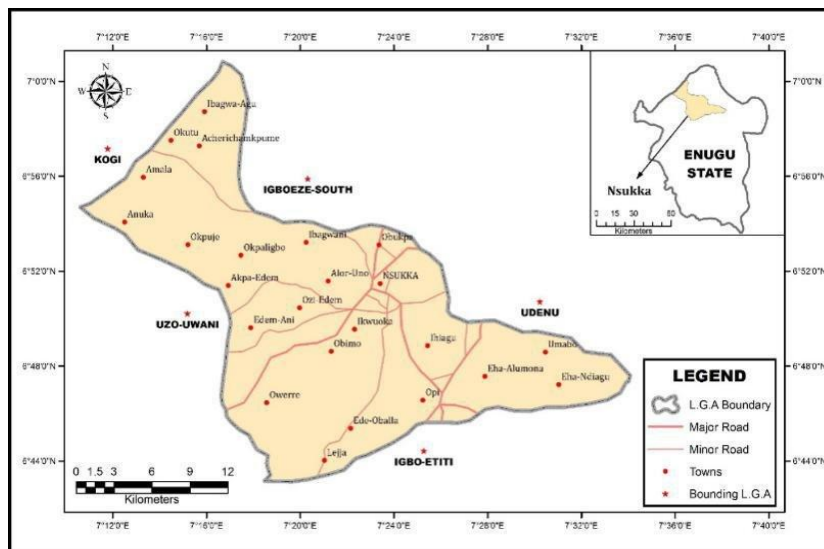


Fig 1: Map of Nsukka Local Government Area

Source:(Nwodo et al., 2018, p. 8471)

Review of Related Literature

Nonetheless, the fact that COVID-19 has disrupted global daily activities in all areas of life is no longer breaking news. The existing relationships among people in society have been severely harmed as the world remains in a state of constant increasing panic to this day (Obioma et al., 2020, p. 2). They note that It has protested social, economic, religious, political, cultural, and scholarly gatherings, among other things. Both powerful and weak countries have been hit by the pandemic. It has also killed a large number of both wealthy and poor people, causing embarrassment and concern in both rich and poor countries (Obioma et al., 2020, p. 2). The spread of COVID-19 and large-scale travel prohibitions are still wreaking havoc on the global tourism and hotel industries (Jiang & Wen, 2020).

Tourism refers to people going for a short length of time to locations other than their typical places of work and residence for specific objective (Collins-kreiner & Wall, 2015). Ekechukwu (2006, p. 183) said that tourism can be viewed as an activity that is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, which touches all aspects of man and society. Tourism is travel for recreational or leisure purposes, while a tourist is a person who travel to and stay in places outside his usual environment for over 24 hours but not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes and not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Babalola & Oluwatoyin, 2014). The tourist has an objective in mind that defined his travel. This could be educational, medical, recreational, religious purpose and many other reasons. The tourist industry is a key driver of economic growth, providing locals with lucrative opportunities, particularly in the hotel industry and other tourism-related businesses (Eja et al., 2013, p. 183). Hospitality is a service industry that attracts tourists to an area(Eja et al., 2013, p. 184). The tourism industry's accommodation is at its heart, and it plays a crucial part in its growth (Solomon, 2020, p. 23). Hospitality industry includes hotels, restaurants, guest houses, snacks bars, and fast food outlets. It is the livewire of tourism.

Tourism has been accorded top priority in the development plan of almost all the developed and developing countries of the world. This is because it creates various employment opportunities for both urban and rural dwellers. It is widely agreed that if Nigeria is to join the Council of Great Nations, it must take concerted steps to diversify its funding sources away from oil. The federal government has reaffirmed its commitment to broadening the country's revenue base with tourism development (Abubakar, 2014, p. 2). However, travel and tourism are one of the world's most important industries, with 9% of global GDP, and a lot of people employed (Amalu & Ajake, 2015).

The tourism sector consists of the following components:

- i. Hotel and hospitality
- ii. Transportation services.
- iii. Entertainment services.
- iv. Travel agencies, tour operators, and other information services
- v. Nigerian national parks
- vi. Natural and man-made attraction services
- vii. Institutions

viii. Stakeholders (Oruonye & Ahmed, 2020, pp. 35 & 36).

International tourists are the major people most attacked by Covid 19 as they travel through several borders to their destination. Thus, this affects the affluent social class globally. They drop their planned tour plans in fear of the disease infection, as it looks impossible to avoid transmission of the virus during travel (Mamirkulova et al., 2020). The closure was done in good faith, although African airlines lost about 4.4 billion USD as of March 2020 (Oruonye & Ahmed, 2020). Oruonye & Ahmed (2020, pp. 31–42) paper, noted that the closure was done in good faith to check the spread of the pandemic but pointed out that African airlines lost about 4.4 billion USD as of March 2020. This paper suggests among other things measures to be taking in post COVID-19 era to include economic diversification, discounts for air travel and a sort of palliative that will encourage people in the aviation sector.

The tourism and leisure industry has faced the COVID-19 tourism impacts hardest-hit and lies among the most damaged global industries. The leisure and internal tourism indicated a steep decline amounting to 2.86 trillion US dollars, which quantified more than 50% revenue losses (Abbas et al., 2021). This industry always experiences the hardest hits of various diseases, epidemics, seasonal influenza, and global pandemics. The tourism industry encounters the massive adverse consequences of the "black swan" major crisis events, including the global financial crunch in 1997 and 2008, the SARS epidemic in 2003, various social unrests, and earthquakes (Lee & Chen, 2021). The emergence of the deadliest viral disease has affected all economic sectors and overwhelmed tourists and customers' satisfaction.

Hotel pays taxes that add to the income of the state. The supply chain of the industry has a multiplier effect, producing activity in almost every other economic sector (Mensah, 2006). Hotel guests, for example, spend money on shopping, entertainment, transportation, and dining. Hotels are the most common venue for meetings, exhibits, and conventions. It also has an indirect impact on the local economy by ensuring the presence and survival of tourist support facilities. In Nigeria, hospitality business has demonstrated significant strength in terms of human resources and structural growth, particularly as the country's economy shifts away from oil and toward tourism (Amalu & Ajake, 2015, p. 108).

The following paper in the review is by Amzat et al. (2020) and is titled "Coronavirus Outbreak in Nigeria: Burden and Socio-Medical Response throughout the First 100 Days." The impact of bans, limitations, and lockdowns on Nigerians' socioeconomic lives between March and June 2020 is the main subject of this article, as it is for every previous work on COVID-19. The study focused on government reactions to the crisis. Furthermore, it highlights the strategies of government health institutions, provision of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) which was in short supply, the fund management of the Covid-19 pandemic and other strategies to combat the virus. This research indicates that the federal, state, and local governments' coordination in fighting the virus was insufficient. Several governments have advocated or regulated the use of hygienic practices such as hand washing, social (spatial) distancing, and isolation in order to limit the spread of the virus.

Khazami et al. (2020) examined the topic "Tourism Re-Preparation Following COVID-19". This paper identifies some of the aforementioned challenges of the tourism sector under covid-19 lockdown but specifically relates to this study from the perspective of its suggestions on how to improve the tourism sector in Nigeria. Among options provided by the paper for post Covid-19 tourism in Nigeria, the idea of inventing digital museum on you tube and digital platforms so that subscribers could do so from the comfort of their homes is very inviting. Second, the paper identifies the need to recreate children's club and other relaxation centres for families that have been locked down based on decent environment and good hygiene's. Cruise lines, hotels, and the hospitality industry are seeing decreased demand and patronage as nations around the world continue to impose travel restrictions and close their borders.

Jiang et al. (2019) examined the tourism potentials of Wulingyuan city of China. According to the publication, Wulingyuan Scenic Spot, Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, Suoxiyu National Reserve, and Tianzishan National Preserve were established in 1988, according to the publication. The aforementioned government establishment marks the origin of tourism potentials that frictions of bureaucracy have not left to develop. This paper provides a template for Nigeria especially in looking at the several abandoned tourism potentials that will boost the nation's economy.

Those involved in poultry goods, agricultural, and vegetable products have expressed concern following the closure of restaurants, hotels, barbecue joints, clubs, pubs, and other food outlets due to a high level of low patronage (Anyanwu, 2020, p. 23). It was not surprising when the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) in July 2020 announced that about N1.4 trillion investments was under threat with hundred thousand jobs threatened (Sanyaolu, 2020, p. 25). The situation in Pre-Covid-19 era showed much hope that in 2019, there was 4 percent growth in international arrival resorting to about N1.5 billion and with 3 to 4 percent increased forecast of about 2.4 million arrivals in Nigeria by 2020 (Formatting Citation). This saw to rise in new hotels and employees. The circumstances created by the covid-19 pandemic dashed some of these rising hopes.

The COVID-19 created new options of doing things. It help to connect tourism to digital economy (Ewuzie, 2020, p. 20). Travel research scholars propose that e-tourism can transform tourism's future

by rendering measurable and versatile value structures, structural definitions, theoretical trends, and tangible and flexible technical conceptions (Ma et al., 2021). Meanwhile at the same period, there was a challenge faced in the advertising sector as a result of the pandemic. The Out of Home ₦47.2 billion billings projection in the year 2020 by Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria was not met as a result of the pandemic. This is because people at a time resulted to online and TV platforms to advertise. Tourism is one of the most directly affected sectors by the current crisis, necessitating immediate and long-term solutions. Pandemic crises results in the closure of tourist sites and attractions, the cancellation or delay of major festivals and events, and limitations on public gatherings (indoors and outdoors).

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Tourism Potentials and Attractions in the Study Area

The tourist attractions at Nsukka are cultural festivals, iron-working sites, caves/rock-shelters, blacksmithing workshops, museums, amusement parks, institutions, rivers, sacred grove and shrine sites, hotels, and others. These attractions are of great interest to both domestic and international tourists. People travel from far and near to Nsukka to visit these attractions. Caves and rock-shelter are found in Opi and Obukpa. Opi's cave/rock shelter are Ogba cave (Idi-opi), Ndukwa cave (Umuile Opi) and Ntene rock-shelter (Idi-opi). Obukpa cave is *Ishi ukwu*. The cave possesses a spectacular rock landscapes that would excite the imagination of any tourist who visits the area. Okpu rock shelter in Akpa Edem is located at the outskirts of Amadimba. This rock shelter is situated at the middle of a hill and can accommodate from fifty to hundred people inside it. Within the depression of the shelter is a spring which has its source from the hill on top of the rock shelter. As it flows down it tumbles like a water fall in front of the rock shelter. The beauty of the rock shelter coupled with the water that is constantly splashing from the rock is the most enthralling thing that attracts tourist to the site. These areas have religious implications because they are taking as abode of the gods among the people of Nsukka. These tourist attractions have biological species like monkeys, Antelopes, Gazelles, Squirrels, Grass cutters and other games that people hunt for their livelihood.

Opi is endowed with Lakes. The lakes are connected to one another as a network system. Eze-agu iyi, Ogelube, Orufu, Nkpo, Ikpa, Uhuru, and Ozzii are the names of the lakes in their dialects. The lakes have sand beach, crocodile and other aquatic species. They are situated in Opi agu forest reserve. Pagans visit the lakes for religious worship and sacrifices. Adada River is another place for tourist's visits at Nsukka. It is situated at Nkpologu. The environment is cool. The river comes out of a very big rock. It has its source from Lejja in Nsukka. People visit Adada River mostly for relaxation (picnic) and swimming. It has an open area where tourists could relax for a while after swimming. The area attracts both the domestic and international tourists. It is a key source of water for the locals and the nearby towns, and it is available all year. During the dry season, commercial tanker trucks collect water to sell to the locals and communities in the Nsukka area. The local communities farm along the river bank and some use the water for irrigation during the dry season.

Nsukka people are known for iron smelting, basketry, palm wine tapping, pottery making, honey bee processing etc. The finished products could be sold as a souvenir product to tourists. They are source of livelihood to Nsukka people. Ekechukwu (2009, p. 273) notes that tourism resources help in enhancing the prosperity and condition of living of the many communities in which they are situated. In both urban and rural locations, tourism has a tendency to promote local handicrafts and cultural activities. Tourist spending creates significant tax revenue for the local economy and has a multiplier effect (Solomon, 2020, p. 23). Human communities are a primary source of tourism, and their existence in any location at any time can be used to justify tourism development (Eze, 2011, p. 15). Tourists after visiting the attractions lodge in one of the Hotels at Nsukka before going back to the place of abode. These hotels are also relaxing places for the indigenes who want to stay away from day's activities.

There are relics of iron smelting sites scattered in different locations at Nsukka. The iron smelting sites communities were Lejja and Opi. Tourists visit the sites in order to see the relics of the past. Lejja iron smelting site is located at Dunoka village. Lejja slag blocks are in cylindrical form. Dunoka iron smelting site in Lejja is a great smelting site because of the weighty numbers of slag arranged in front of the masquerade house. (Eze-Uzomaka, 1996) notes that it is the largest in Nsukka and its environs. Most of the slag heaps are used as seats especially during village and community meeting. Cylindrical slags are also seen at Opi Nsukka at the customary court. About 2km east of Afor Opi market, a cylindrical slag blocks have been arranged in a shrine at Odinaso Idi Opi village (Eze, 2011). Eze (2011) suggested that it could be a research centre for students on practical lessons and fieldwork. Iron smelting sites help tourists to understand the early iron working technology Lejja and Opi people. These communities are known for blacksmithery. The people produce cultural craft with local emblems that serve as a souvenir to tourists as they visit the tourist's sites. These products are kitchen utensils, traps, agricultural implements, local guns, rings and anklets. Shrines and sacred groves are areas cultural tourists enjoy visiting. One of them is Ohe Nsukka shrine in Odoru, Nsukka. The shrine is between St. Cyprian special science school and Ikenga hotels limited. Adoro Ero Shrine in Aro-Ulo is another one that

tourist visits for research. Edem-Ani has a sacred grove called Ede dim eje” forest. The grove is located about one and half kilometers from Ofulonu junction at the right hand side of Nsukka –Ofulonu –Edem road. Shrines and grooves are places the host community commune with their ancestors and the deities of the land, as such it is held sacred. These areas harbour biological species within and around the site. The grove houses such animals as monkeys, snakes, Antelopes and gazelles.

There are two museums that feed the tourists when they visit Nsukka. The museums are being constructed in collaboration with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka's Department of Archaeology and Tourism, as well as the Institute of African Studies (IAS). The archaeological museum is very rich in sculptural, traditional and archaeological materials. IAS museum has a lot of cultural materials from different parts of Nigeria. IAS museum is a historical museum; the background information of each object was attached with the objects. Tourist who came to the university visits the museums in order to look at the cultural objects. A curator is assigned to be in charge of each museum. Archaeological museum has an open air museum of traditional architecture. This is the restaurant unit, which serves all kinds of local delicacies. It is known as archaeological villa or kitchen by UNN students. Students from other universities go there on excursion. The presence of restaurant makes people to relax and be refreshed before going back to their place of abode.

Nsukka people have a unique cultural festival known as Omabe festival. The Omabe festival last for eight days. The festival is accompanied with cannon gunshots and it is celebrated with different masquerades dancing at the village square. The entire villages gather to watch the artistic display of the masquerades. The masquerades were Oriokpa, Echaricha Mma also known as Ego-Ego Oriya (a masquerade of beauty and elegance), Mgbedike, Ogaranya Mma, Edi Ogbene, and Ogwudire.



Fig 2: Ozzii Lake in Opi Agu



Fig 3: Adada River Source



Fig 4: Iron smelting site at Otobo Dunoka, Lejja in Nsukka

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Nsukka's Hospitality and Tourism Sector

The rapid rise of the hospitality business in general, and hotels in particular, has been forced by the development of tourism potential in nations such as Kenya, Brazil, South Africa, Taiwan, and Nigeria over the previous decade (Pizam & Elish, 2003). Due to the rule of social separation and fear of contacting the disease, COVID-19 has harmed the tourism and hospitality industries in Nsukka. This made visit to tourism destinations not possible since there is restriction of movement. Some essential workers also operate through restrictions. In the study area events such as weddings, child dedication, burials and others were postponed or cancelled, this affects travel and tourism for business and pleasure. From all indications events and social gathering was highly affected. For example, the report of Anthonia Ojenagbon of Silton Food Lagos is worth revisiting. She had an event scheduled for 500 people fully paid. The announcement of the lockdown made her cook for 20 people, on which the 480 food money was refunded (Jibril et al., 2020, p. 12).

Tourists that visit the tourist's attractions and cultural festivals like Omabe lodge in hotels after the day activities. Other cultural expressions of the host communities are witnessed by tourists as they visit the attractions. During traditional marriages and funerals, sons and daughters of Nsukka prefer staying in hotels at Nsukka axis rather than staying at the hinterland. Indeed, Covid 19 affected all manner of social activities, visits and other engagements at Nsukka. Interview we had with Chief of the autonomous community in Nsukka Local Government area, Igwe George F. O. Asadu, his Royal Highness (Okpe Udo 1, of Nsukka Asadu, a retired Nigerian soldier)(75years old) said that there was no cultural events during Covid 19 pandemic. Everybody stayed at home observing the rules from Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Social distancing, wearing of face mask, and washing hands with sanitizer were observed to the core in the palace and in all the households respectively. All the host communities in the study area did not observe Omabe festival in 2020. The year was called the year of corona. The only gathering permitted was sharing of food palliatives. People come in batches to take the palliative, overcrowding was totally avoided.

The researchers visited New Ikenga Hotel and Resort, Golden Valley Hotel and Suites, Jerry Marriot, Kennan Lodge, See New Hotel, Remax Hotel, and El-Erina Hotel during their field investigation. In the early period of Covid 19, the hotel managers were invited by Honourable Omeje, the former Chairman of Nsukka Local Government Area. He had an orientation seminar with them on the protective measures and danger of Covid 19 pandemic. Apart from teaching them on social distancing, wearing of face mask, washing of hand with sanitizer, keeping their hotel environment clean was also emphasized. On this, the management of the hotels supplied all their staff with nose mask and sanitizers in the study area. In all the hotels the wash hand buckets with taps and sanitizer are kept at the entrance.

The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) posted at Nsukka sent letters to the hotels to close down the bar sections and be conscious of those that visit their hotels. The restaurants were open because of the few visitors that lodged in the hotels before the Covid 19. Many people were sent away, although 1 or 2 people that have special assignment within the area were allowed to stay. No recreational activities like swimming and clubbing; this is to avoid body contact. The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) at that period visits hotels and made sure that social distancing of 1m or 3 feet was observed. According to the auditor Kennan Lodge, Mr Chigozie Ugwuogo, he said that NCDC staff came and removed some seats from the restaurants in order to have effective social distancing. Two persons per each big tables and one person to each small sized tables. Covid 19 is a respiratory infection that spreads mostly by direct contact with respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Therefore, physical distancing limits the spread of Covid 19.

It is evident that during Covid 19, people stopped visiting or lodging in hotels. This is because hotels are at high risk. Moreover, before Covid 19 sets in, the rooms that were booked and lodged per a day were higher. This dropped to almost few or no room occupied during the peak of Covid 19.

Table 1: The Statistics of Hotels per a day before and during the peak of Covid 19

S/N	Hotels	No of Rooms in the Hotels	No of Rooms Occupied before Covid 19	No of Rooms Occupied during the peak of Covid 19
1	Golden Valley	42	40	None
2	Jerry Marriot	45	30	2
3	New Ikenga	52	52	5
4	Kennan Lodge	30	20	None
5	See New Hotel	32	20	None
6	Remax Hotel	23	21	None
7	El-Rina	22	15	None
Total				7

Source: Field Work, July 2020

At the peak of Covid 19 (March, April and May) all the hospitality industries at Nsukka experienced a decline in patronage. Few people that visited New Ikenga and Resort were health workers that came on assignment at Nsukka. The respondents said that such health workers include NCDC staff, police force and Red Cross workers. Jerry Marriot Hotel experienced the worst hit at Nsukka because a white man lodged in the hotel prior to Covid 19 parlava. The presence of the white man during the peak period of Covid 19 caused a lot of people to be afraid. The lockdown system kept people at a spot and some people were stuck in the hotel premises due to intra state boundaries. The implication is that price of the rooms were reduced so that people could come and lodge in the hotels, still it was deserted. In Ikenga hotel for instance, rooms that are rented for N40, 000.00 are given at N5, 000.00.

Prices of food supply and other resources were high in Nsukka. Within this high cost of food items, some hotels still sell a plate of food at a normal rate. Some hotels like See New Hotel, Remax Hotel and New Ikenga and Resort sell at reduced price in order to keep customers. For instance, in New Ikenga and Resort the normal rate of a plate of food in is ₦2, 500.00, which was reduced to ₦ 1,500.00. Bars, restaurants, swimming pools, and pool bars were closed. No clubbing, partying and other social events of any kind in hotels. Irrespective that there were no much hotel activities going on, the hotels maintained constant power supply. This drastic change caused a huge financial downturn in tourism and hospitality industry in the study area.

Majority of the hotels sacked their workers during the peak of Covid 19. In New Ikenga Hotel, twenty eight workers were sacked. This is because the management of the hotels cannot meet up with the payment of staff salaries. Half salaries were paid to those that were retained. The people retained were the managers, security personnels, a cleaner and a receptionist. However, Jerry Marriot hotel did not sack any staff rather they pay them half salary. The managers that were paid ₦50, 000.00 receives ₦25, 000.00 and a receptionist that was paid ₦20, 000.00 receives ₦10, 000.00 monthly. On this, the researchers asked a question from interview guide, what are the criteria for laying off of the staff?

“The respondents answered that the management of the hotels used performance appraisal. Secondly checking the staff files, those people that usually take permission were sacked.

The researchers asked the question “Is there any event and occasion in the hotel during the peak of Covid 19”?

“The respondents said that there was none. At Jerry Marriot hotel, a total of sixteen people that booked the hall and open space for wedding, birthday, and other events later demanded for a refund of their money. Of which the management refunded some theirs and others were waiting for when the restrictions will be lifted. Likewise, other hotels at Nsukka experienced the same”.

VI. DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that COVID-19 has a negative impact on the hospitality and tourism industries in Nsukka, Nigeria. The clause social distancing made people to be confined in their homes and all business activities were stand still. The revenue from the hotels at the study area was pulled down to zero. This affects the amount of money paid as tax to the government as mentioned by one of the respondents in New Ikenga and Resort. Usually hotels are managed using internal generated fund. Since there was a decline in patronage, the money remitted to the government was small.

Since there was total lockdown, tourist destinations and cultural events lose their value. First time in history, Nsukka people do not celebrate their Omabe festival. Tourists and researchers that usually come to witness the festivals and other tourist attractions have no opportunity to do so. This affects the cultural identity and economic base of the state at large. Since there is ban in interstate and global travel. People that have official assignment are allowed to travel with restrictions by a pass paper issued by the DPO through the governor of the state.

The Chiefs and their executives in each autonomous community at Nsukka help to guard their people from contacting Covid 19 pandemic. No visitors or tourists were allowed into the communities except government officials that were sent to sensitize them on the issue of Covid 19 Pandemic. As the tourist activities were affected, there is a decrease in local income. Usually, tourists that visit the host community use the opportunity to sell their local products. This is because tourism helps to increase the local income, thereby upgrading the standard of living of the people of the host communities. Tourists buy souvenirs in form of arts and crafts produced by the local people. The souvenir products were stalked in a place without much sell during the peak of Covid 19. At the same time, during festival people open shops and some hawkers walk around to sell their goods. They increase the price of their products because of the huge demand of the items. Covid 19 made all the business activities to be at a standstill. Social distancing approach intensified it the more. There is a drop also in hotel activities like lodging, bar, restaurants, visit to recreational areas and clubbing. Events and accommodation bookings were cancelled. As a result of this, the tourist and hotel businesses experienced a decline.

VII. CONCLUSION

As the consequences of COVID-19 spread over the globe, governments and companies must prioritize the protection of their citizens. Clients in the hospitality and leisure industries were among the first to be affected by the severe weather. The full disruption effect of the travel ecosystem has a huge influence on global tourism. The effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on the tourist and hospitality businesses in Nsukka, Nigeria, was explored in this study. This situation had a lot of negative impact on Nigerian hotels and tourism destinations. The clause of social distancing made people in the study area confined to their homes, and all business activities were stopped. If implemented in the study region, e-marketing and electronic transactions could be a viable approach to preventing the pandemic from spreading among customers and staff. Keeping the hotel and its

environment clean is another option for tourism recovery in the face of COVID-19 because people are always concerned about their health and safety. The hospitality and tourism industries should adopt guest management procedures. To maintain social distance, the offices should be clearly marked (1–2 m of markings on the floor). On arrival and departure, screen all guests and keep track of them in a log. They use hand sanitizers, wear nose masks, wear gloves when handling currency, and follow other NCDC regulations. Communal areas must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day, or after guests have used them. On a regular basis, sanitize all points of contact. Sanitizers must be available in all public restrooms. Hand-washing facilities will be strategically placed. Management and supervisors check processes and procedures on a regular basis to ensure that they are being followed. Every day, the bed linens must be washed, pressed, and replaced. Vacuuming of carpets and rugs on the floor, as well as heat vacuuming of curtains, should be done on a daily basis. Antibacterial gels or soaps should be placed in each room. To comply with social distancing rules, restaurant and lounge seating areas should be spaced out. Hazardous and clinical waste should be properly disposed of. To ensure that waste is handled safely, provide suitable PPE for employees. Virtual tourism has to be introduced in order to avoid body contact between individuals. Virtual tourism helps to advertise tourism destinations and unique cultural areas. For virtual tourism to be effective, unique tourism and cultural areas should be documented. Only the documented ones would be seen online by tourists. The hotel rate should be flexible, and the government should initiate tax reduction schemes for all business owners.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The manuscript has been read and approved by all the named authors.

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