

EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE OF HOTELS IN ADO-EKITI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

Umar Usman Jimoh^{A*}, Kehinde Rotimi Idowu^A

Received: January 31, 2024 | Accepted: Jun 25, 2024

DOI: 10.5937/ZbDght2401016J

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the performance of hotels in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area with a view to promoting customer satisfaction in the industry. A cross-sectional survey research design was used while both primary and secondary data were sourced. A purposive multistage sampling technique was used. All hotels in the study area were enumerated and 49 out of 124 hotels found in the area were sampled, representing 40% of the sample frame. A copy of a pretested questionnaire targeted at the customers using a ratio of 1:5 corresponding to all the sampled hotels. Subsequently, 187 returned questionnaires were used for the analysis. Some criteria were established and used to evaluate the performance of the hotels. The data collected was analysed using statistical frequency distributions. The findings revealed that the majority (72.2%) of the respondents were male. The credibility criteria for evaluating the performance of hotels revealed that over 75% of the customers were not satisfied with the services of the hotels. The majority (67.4%) of the sampled hotels were not interacting with their customers online. Meanwhile, the majority (71.1%) of the hotels had provisions for phone facilities to ease communication. Moreover, none (0.0%) of the hotels employed the service of a nurse in case of emergency. About 67.0% of the hotels lack adequate facilities. In conclusion, the performances of the hotels in the study were adjudged to be suboptimal due to poor planning. Therefore, the Government and the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) should start a collaborative environmental management approach for the industry and the society.

Keywords: performance of hotels; evaluative criteria; Ado-Ekiti; hotels; customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry, in other words, can be referred to as the hospitality industry. Koja and Gorica (2010) categorically stated that the hotel industry works on the ideals of sustainable tourism development. According to Carlson (2002), the aims of a hotel as an establishment are to provide comfortable, suitable accommodation and catering services that are safe in a friendly, hospitable, and pleasing manner to whosoever needs such provisions. For an organization to be called a hotel, it must have a minimum of six letting bedrooms, at least three of which must have attached private bathroom facilities (Baber & Kaurav, 2015; Hermant, 2011).

The hotel industry is important not only for its positive economic effects but also because of its negative social and environmental implications. In order to effectively and consistently provide an adequate and qual-

^A Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Environmental Design and Management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

* Correspondence: jimoluadams@gmail.com

ity performance of hotels in urban centres of the developing world, there is a need to initiate necessary structures and systems to facilitate environmental management to improve the performance of hotels (Graci, 2009; Jumia Travel, 2016)). Aishawarya (2017) pointed out that global issues and challenges faced by the hotel industry today can be expected to potentially have the greatest impact on the performance of hotels in developing countries, such as the global financial crisis, competition, product offering, poor management, and inadequate security.

The hotel as an important recreational facility is expected to meet some planning, design, and management strategies to ensure optimal performance. Performance, in this context, refers to the relationship between the industry and the environment. It involves the environmental effects of resources consumed, the environmental impacts of the organizational activities, and the implications of its services, the recovery, processing of products, and meeting the community requirements (Mensah, 2007).

The performance of hotels in Nigeria stems from the fact that Nigeria's tourism sector, which is part of the hospitality industry, is still operating below capacity even as tourism becomes the fastest-growing industry globally (Okpara, 2010). The profitability and quality performance of the hotel industry depend primarily on the services provided to the customers by the organization (Chan & Mackenzie, 2013). The gradual decline in the performance of many large and successful hotels in Nigeria points to a lack of knowledge on the impact of strategic management on the sustainable high performance of hotels in the country (Okpara, 2010). It was also said that Nigeria is not ranked on tour operators' brochures and that the country's image, visa issue, and poor road networks are among the reasons tour operators are not packaging Nigeria for world travellers (Okpara, 2010).

According to Awujo and Ukabuilu (2005), many studies on the quality performance of hotels indicate that very few studies have been conducted to establish credibility criteria for evaluating the performance of hotels in developing countries. Okpara (2010) stated that part of the reason why the Nigerian hotel industry seems less competitive at the global level is the lack of well-spelt-out, improved and accessible tourism products. In Nigeria, there are some negative issues associated with the performance of hotels in the environment, such as low quality of service, insecurity, shortage of highly skilled personnel, inadequate infrastructure, etc. However, very few empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the factors affecting the performance of hotels in Nigeria (National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism, 2007). Okpara (2010) thinks the country's performance of hotels is weak because the government has not done enough in areas such as the provision of infrastructure like power, roads, and security.

Literature on the studies of hotels abounds. For instance, Pizam (1994) researched factors influencing the hotel industry, and it was found that the majority of customers were not satisfied with the price of products and services of hotels in developing countries. Furthermore, Gursay and Swanger (2007) also jointly conducted research on the hospitality industry and discovered that facility adequacy, change in technology, compliance with legislation laws and other organization characteristics can influence the level of success of the industry. Despite all the available studies on the performance of hotels, which investigated the outcome of their services using specific criteria have been adequately explored in the literature. This study, therefore, was designed to evaluate the performance of hotels in Ado-Ekiti. This is with the view of providing solutions to the identified problems that have plagued the sector for a while. The study will also enable the investors as well as policymakers to know how to run the industry to the best of its performance.

THE STUDY AREA

History of Ado-Ekiti Local Government

Ado-Ekiti is a city in the southwestern part of Nigeria, the state capital and headquarters of Ekiti State, the state was carved out from Ondo state in 1996, and since then, the state has witnessed a tremendous change in its economic advancement. The state has witnessed an influx of people from various places (Babatola, 2008).

The population of Ado-Ekiti in 2012 was 424,340. The people of Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area are mainly of the Ekiti sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba. Ado-Ekiti has an open-door policy of accepting newcomers, especially those who are willing to work hard and are searching for economic opportunities. These categories of people, apart from Yoruba settlers in the town include, the Ebira, Igbo and Hausa, Fulani just to mention a few. The town offered more opportunities for laudable achievements. As a result, industrious artisans, farmers, traders as well as ambitious able-bodied men and women looking for security and better economic opportunities migrated to Ado and settled down to engage in farming and trading activities (Oke, 2006).

According to the Ekiti State Ministry of Tourism Development, Ado-Ekiti local government has about 124 hotels. However, the city has the largest concentration of different classes of hotels in Ekiti State

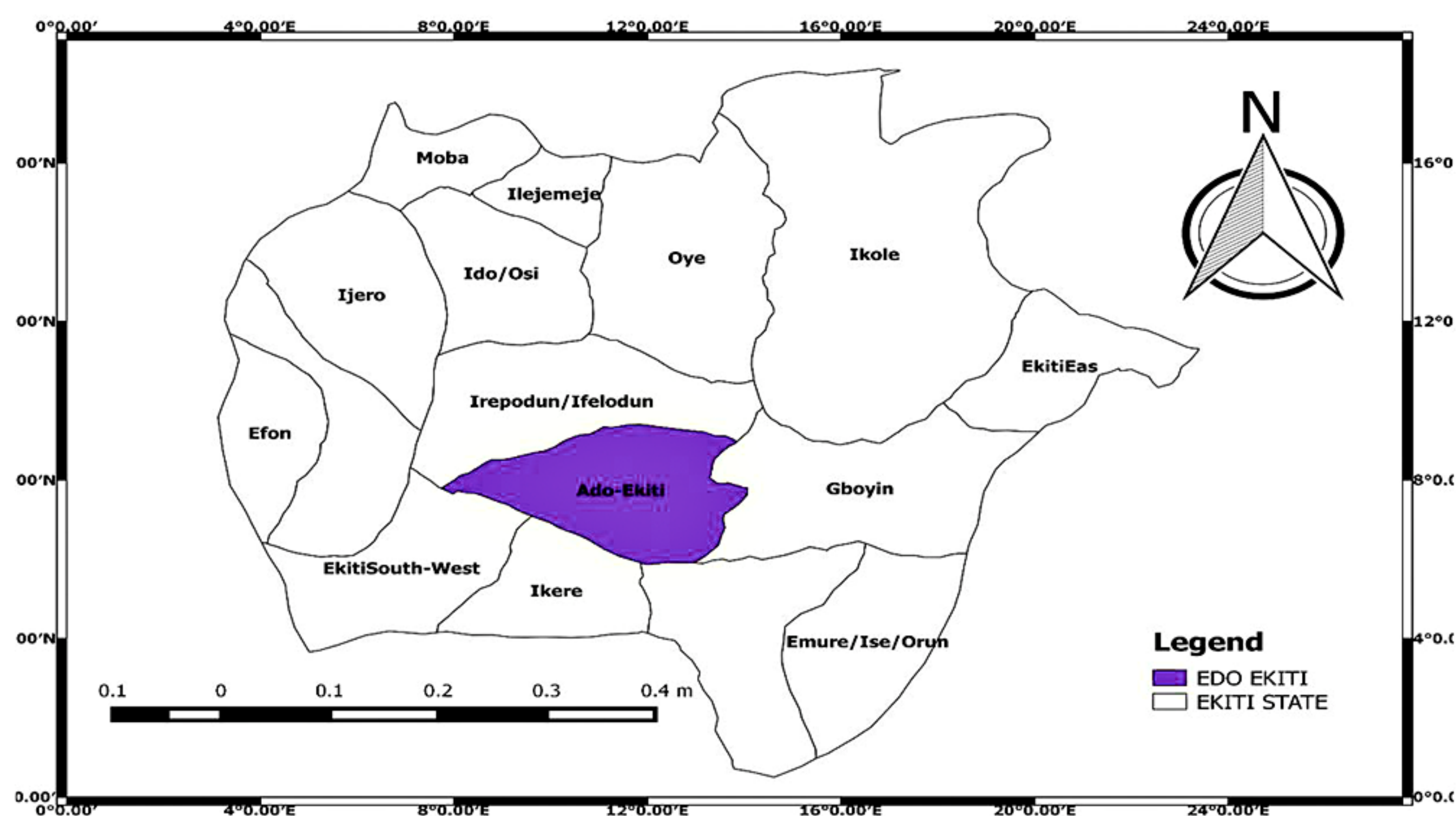


Figure 1. Map of Ekiti State showing Ado-Ekiti Local Government

Source: Ekiti State Ministry of Work (2020)

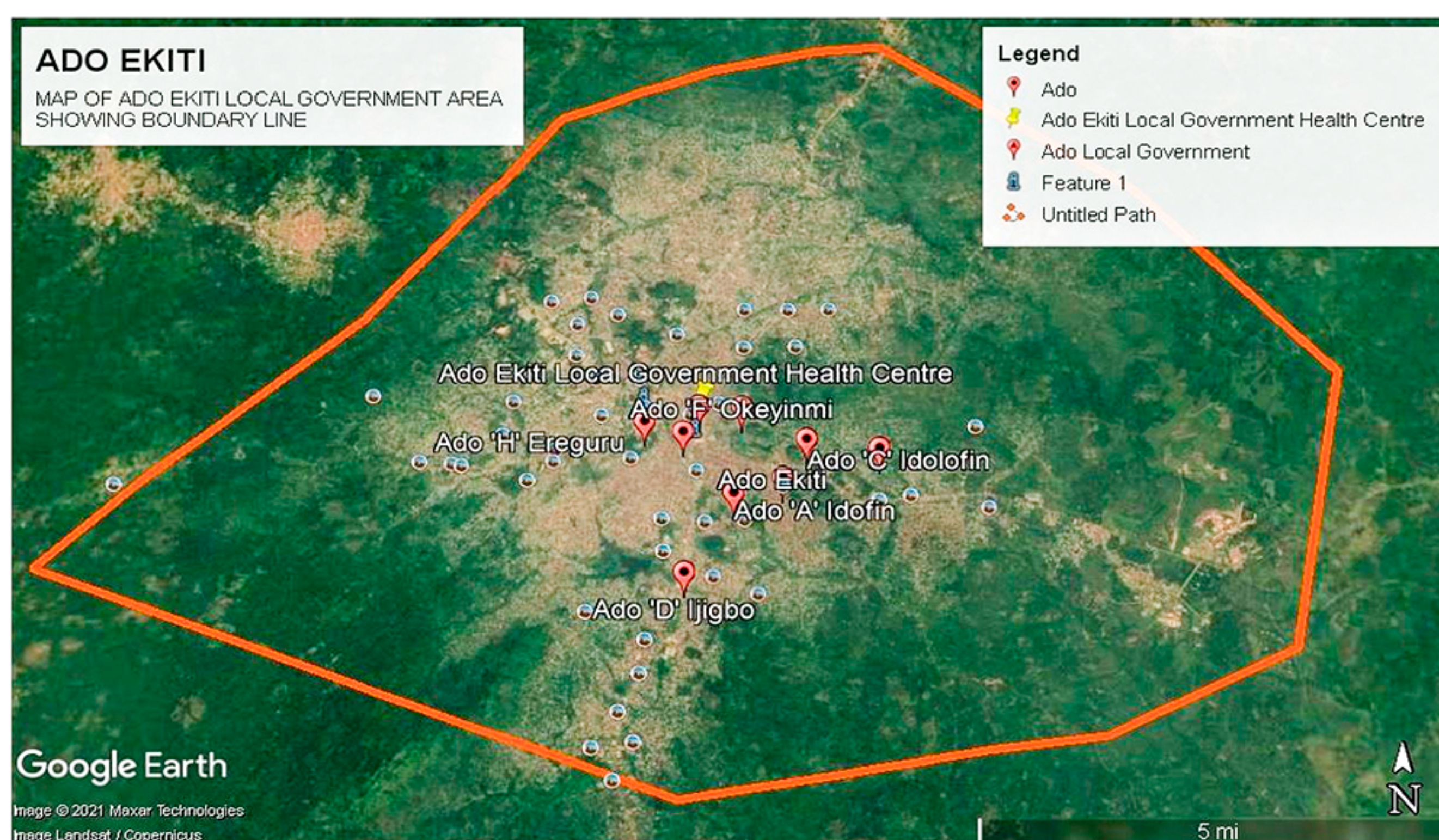


Figure 2. Google Earth Image showing the boundary of Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area

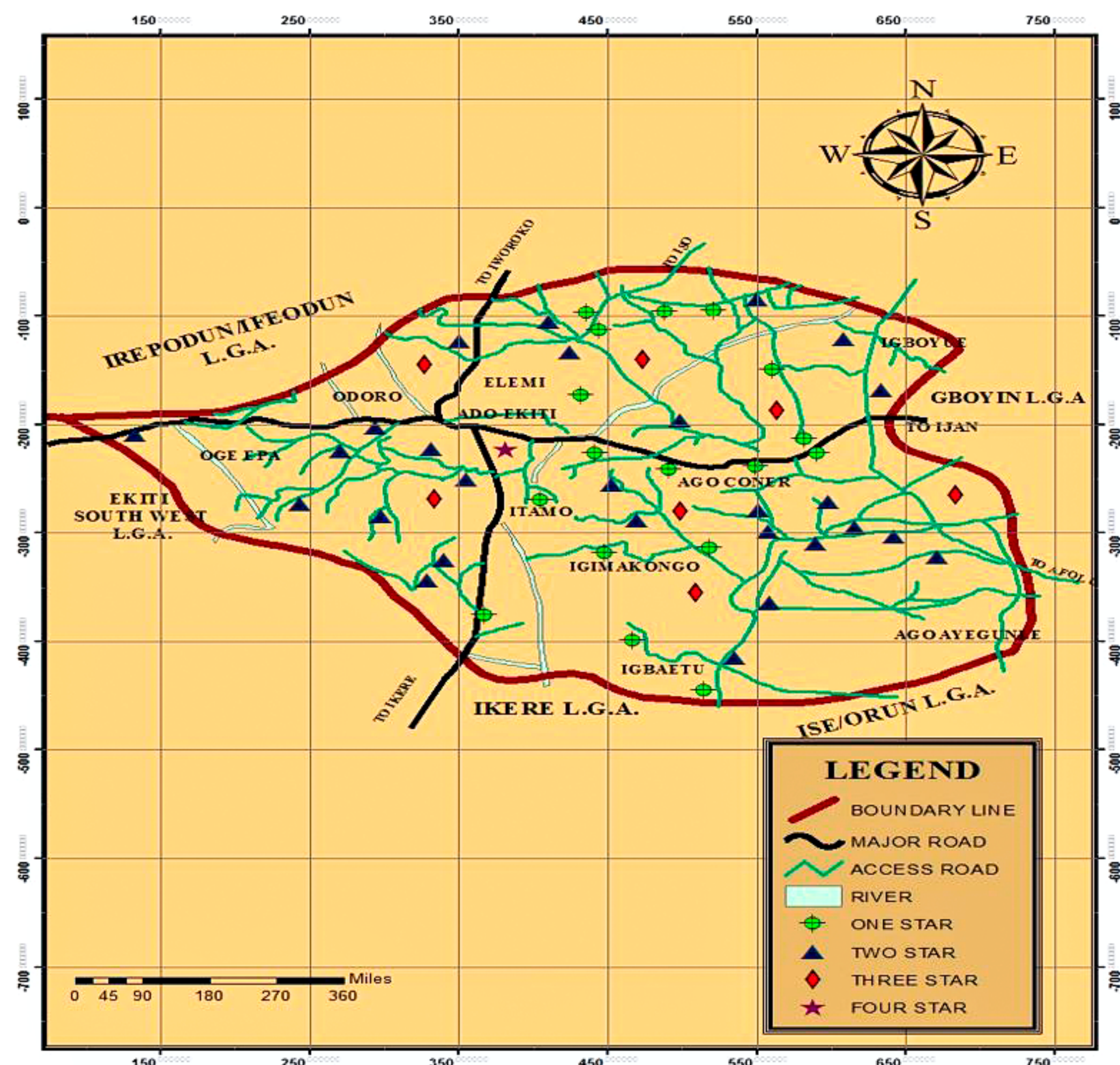


Figure 3. Map of Ado-Ekiti Local Government showing the location of sampled hotels

Source: Authors' Mapping (2021)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The performance of the hotel industry has been well documented in the available literature (Gössling, 2002). Since tourist accommodation constitutes the largest sub-sector of the tourism industry, it therefore has undisputable wide impacts on the environment, rendering sustainability in the industry a priority issue (Graci, 2009). He also asserted that the aim of evolving credibility criteria in evaluating the performance of hotels focuses on reducing or eradicating the negative effects on customers and having better relationships with the environment. According to Jumia Travel (2016), organisational characteristics influence the performance of any industry. The company's performance could be affected by the condition of available facilities such as innovation, safety, and service excellence (Awujo and Ukabuilu, 2005). A survey carried out by Roberts and Dowling in 2002 indicates that younger hotels adapting to new technological innovation with adequate facilities are more active than older ones in performance and protecting the environment. The relationship between available facilities and performance is assessed using new technology since new technology tends to be more efficient and effective (Choi and Chu, 2001).

The theory of the performance of a hotel is of vital importance. The theory enables the management to make decisions appropriate for the hotel industry and enhance the performance of the organisation (Haktanir, 2006). Hotel management is more and more committed to establishing a Performance Measurement (PM) System in order to show, in the best possible way, which weaknesses are observed in the business and where improvements could be made to be able to satisfy the needs of all customers (Alvarez-Gil et al., 2001, Haktanir, 2006; UNWTO, 2017). To capture the full picture of hotel performance, additional factors must be borne in mind. According to Jochen (2020), there are some key elements or criteria such as finance, service excellence, health and safety, innovation, and facility adequacy for evaluating the performance of hotels.

Criteria for assessing the performance of hotels

Various factors are imperative in assessing the performance of a hotel (Jochen, 2020). This shall be discussed.

Facility Adequacy: No matter how hotels innovate, there are still some basic facilities that a hotel must offer to its guests (EHL Advisory Service, 2020). Adequate facilities of the hotel mean distribution lines or facilities having sufficient capacity to meet the maximum estimated service requirements of its existing customers and of any new customers occurring during the year following the commencement of permanent electric service to ensure customer continuity and quality performance (Sheng and Chen, 2013).

Finance: Hotels are primarily profit-driven enterprises. This requirement sees hotels pursue strategic management accounting techniques such as cost optimization, value chain analysis and benchmarking (Gursoy and Swanger, 2007). In doing so, they may choose between a market-orientation or sales-orientation business strategy to optimize their financial outcomes. This evaluative criterion affects the price and affordability of the service provided to the customers and this can be measured by considering customer satisfaction (Graci, 2009).

Health and safety: When you think “health and safety”, think “risk analysis, quality labels and safety procedures”. It has always been important for hotels, as employers, to keep a close eye on workplace health and safety. Guests, too, want to spend their time in a clean, hygienic, safe environment (Jochen, 2020). Meeting food safety standards is crucial for any hotel restaurant, and your legal team will thank you for staving off any potential lawsuits arising from safety-related liability issues, of course. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown a particularly bright spotlight on health and safety (Jung et al., 2021). The respective regulations have become far more stringent, and guests’ expectations have become significantly higher in a very short space of time. In response to this, major hotel brands, such as five-star, four-star and other hotels, have made it their mission to instil confidence in their customers by implementing strict protocols (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021).

Innovation: Innovation in the hotel environment can be found in review processes, by consulting consumer trends and employing fitting IT systems, for instance. The Hospitality Innovation Industry Report distinguishes between technological and non-technological innovation (Choi and Chu, 2001). The process innovation is primarily to improve the communication and internal operation of the hotel industry (Magri, 2019). According to Wu (2013), innovation encompasses changes and implementation that can enable organisations to meet customer satisfaction.

Service excellence: Service excellence is “the ability of service providers to consistently meet and occasionally even exceed customers’ expectations”. This strong orientation towards guest satisfaction relies upon various efforts and strategies, such as reliably delivering on promises, providing personal service, and proactively managing customer feedback (Magri, 2019). Providing service excellence is a challenge – and doing so consistently, to the point where people seek your hotel thanks to this virtue in particular, requires a comprehensive service culture as embodied by the Ritz-Carlton. According to EHL Advisory Service (2020), success in service excellence keeps guests coming back for more. Service excellence, as an integral component of business viability in today’s hospitality landscape, deserves a seat at the table in the evaluation of hotel performance.

METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted, while both primary and secondary data were sourced for the study. A purposive multi-stage sampling technique was used in which all 124 hotels in Ado-Ekiti were identified and a convenient sample of 49 hotels representing 40% of the proportional sample frame was drawn for the study (Rahi, 2017). This cut across the hotels which were divided into five strata or categories based on the classification and grading of hotels by the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) (see Table 4.1). In addition, 245 structured questionnaires were administered to customers who patronized the hotels for

a defined period (on-peak period and off-peak period). Issues that were raised include such questions aligning with the socio-economic characteristics and the performance criteria (finance, service excellence, innovation, health, and safety and facility adequacy) of the respondents.

In the end, the 187 questionnaires which were returned were eventually used for the analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data.

Table 1. Questionnaire Administration

NTDC Class of hotels	Population	40% of the population (Sample)	Number of Questionnaire
One Star	37	15	75
Two Star	66	26	130
Three Star	18	7	35
Four Star	3	1	5
Total	124	49	245

Source: Author's Data Analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

■ Socio-economic characteristics of Respondents (Hotels' users)

Regarding the gender distribution of the respondents in the study area, the majority (72.2%) of the customers were male. The reason is that male customers have a higher level of satisfaction with the overall activities in hotel industries than females. The age distribution of the respondents revealed that the majority (39.5%) were between the age group 30-40 years, followed by the age group under 30. Moreover, findings revealed that the majority (96.3%) of the respondents were Nigerians, while only 3.7% were foreigners. This is because where the hotels are domiciled are completely off the trunk A road, i.e., federal government road, coupled with the fact that virtually all the roads leading to the town are very far from the federal road connection. Apart from people who have essential things to do out of shared obligation, most of the people who live in the surroundings will make a journey to Ado intending to return the same day. This result corroborates the work of Rivera (2004) where over 90% of the hotel customers were local citizens of Costa Rica.

Investigations on marital status revealed that more than half (54.5%) of the respondents are married. Owing to the fact that married people believe that a hotel is a place where they can spend their leisure time and get pleasure they might not likely get in their different homes. However, findings on religious affiliation revealed that the majority (49.7%) of the respondents were Christian. This may be attributed to the early arrival of Christianity in the study area. Results also revealed that 71.1% of the respondents in the study area had tertiary education. In addition, findings on average monthly income of the respondents revealed that the majority (42.8%) who patronize different classes of hotels in the study area were between monthly income groups of ₦60,001 and ₦90,000. Seeing that high proportions of people who patronize hotels in the study area were medium-income earners. This result provides support to the findings of the Ghana Tourism Authority in 2014 where the majority of the hotel customers in Accra were also medium-income earners.

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Hotel Users (Customers) Frequency=187	%
Gender		
Male	134	72.2
Female	52	27.8
Age		
Under 30yrs	71	38.0
30-40yrs	74	39.5
41-50yrs	28	15.0
Over 50yrs	14	7.5
Nationality		
Nigeria	180	96.3
Foreigner	7	3.7
Marital status		
Single	71	38.0
Married	102	54.5
Divorced	8	4.3
Separated	4	2.1
Widow/Widower	2	1.1
Religion		
Christian	93	49.7
Muslim	73	39.0
Traditional	13	7.0
Others	8	4.3
Educational level		
Informal	4	2.1
Primary	2	1.1
Secondary	48	25.7
Tertiary	133	71.1
Monthly income		
Below #30,000	8	4.3
#30,000-60,000	71	38.0
#60,001-90,000	80	42.8
#90,001-120,000	19	10.8
Above #120,000	9	4.8

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Credibility criteria for evaluating the performance of Hotels in the Study Area

A total of five (5) credibility criteria cutting across finance, service excellence, innovation, health and safety, and facility adequacy were developed to evaluate the performance of hotels by customers. This has been used as earlier mentioned in the literature review. This section summarises customers' perceived evaluation of the different criteria.

Finance

Investigation revealed that the majority (75.9%) of the respondents were not satisfied with the price of products and services offered by the hotels in the study area. Regarding affordability of products and services, 70.6% of the respondents were observed to have their products and services are not affordable. The reasons are twofold. On one hand, depending on the class of hotel patronage low-level income earners will find it difficult to patronize the higher-class hotel which may not be accommodated within their level of income. On the other hand, people, particularly politicians and some high-level income earners may not be satisfied with the lower class of hotels. This result aligned with the work of Awujo and Ukabuilu (2005) where it was found that the majority of customers were not satisfied with the price of products and services of hotels in developing countries.

Table 3. Customers' perception of finance

Finance Criteria		Frequency =187	%
Satisfaction with the price of products and services	Satisfied	45	24.1
	Not satisfied	142	75.9
Affordability of products and services	Affordable	55	29.4
	Not affordable	132	70.6

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Service Excellence

The finding revealed that the majority of the hotels had provisions for phone answering services as 71.1% of the respondents attested to its availability. Furthermore, as indicated by the majority (56.7%) of the respondents the provision of personal services by the operators was absent. The reason is that the majority of the hotels in the study area provided special services to rich customers only.

Table 4. Customers' perception of service excellence

Service excellent Criteria		Frequency =187	%
Availability of phone answering service	Available	133	71.1
	Not available	54	28.9
Provision of personal services	Available	81	43.3
	Not available	106	56.7

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Innovation

Findings revealed that the majority (51.3%) of the customers had no access to Internet facilities in the lodged hotels. The reason for the non-availability of Internet facilities could be due to different reasons such as the poor financial capability of the hotel's management, since the patronage is low, the sales or profit margin will be low, meaning, very little amount will be invested into such facility in the hotels. Furthermore, the result also revealed that 67.4% of the customers do not have access to online interaction with hotel operators and management. There is a reflection of the state of the hotels, which is capable of sending people away. In addition, even when there is an online facility, a shortage of staff may also contribute. More than half (51.3%) of the respondents do not adapt to new technologies in their operations. This is because the cost of installation of the new technological system is too expensive and does not guarantee them a high scale of profit.

Table 5. Customers' perception of innovation

Innovation Criteria		Frequency =187	%
Availability of Internet facility	Available	91	48.7
	Not available	96	51.3
Online interaction	Available	61	32.6
	Not available	126	67.4
Adapting to a new technological system	Adapting	91	48.7
	Not adapting	96	51.3

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Health and Safety

Investigation indicated that the majority (94.1%) of the hotels in the study area had clean surroundings. From the findings, the majority (74.3%) of the hotels made provision for first-aid facilities within the hotels. This is because first-aid facilities help an injured person within the hotel in the minutes between the occurrence of the injury and the arrival of a physician. It was observed that none of the sampled hotels in the study area employed the service of a nurse. This implied that the hotel industry in the study area does not take the service of a nurse as an integral part of the service provided to customers. The result corroborates the finding of Okpara (2010) who pointed out that the lack of health facilities and personnel as of one of the challenges facing the hotel industry in Nigeria. However, results prove that the majority (56.7%) of the hotels in the study area have adequate security.

Table 6. Customers' perception of Health and Safety

Health and Safety Criteria		Frequency =187	%
Availability of clean surrounding	Available	176	94.1
	Not available	11	5.9
Availability of first aid	Available	139	74.3
	Not available	48	25.7
Availability of nurse	Available	-	-
	Not available	187	100
Availability of adequate security	Available	106	56.7
	Not available	81	43.3

Source: Author's Data Analysis

Facility Adequacy

Findings revealed that the majority (69.5%) of the hotels in the study area have adequate electricity and water facilities. Concerning the adequacy of hotel bedroom facilities, the investigation revealed that 72.2% of the bedroom facilities were adequate. The reason is that hotel rooms are meant to provide accommodation for customers, which must also be well-equipped for customer satisfaction. Findings also revealed that 77.5% of hotels in the study area were equipped with check-in and check-out facilities, this facility helps to prevent long queues from forming at the reception desk. Moreover, the investigation revealed that the majority (67.4%) of the hotels in the study area, apart from the aforementioned facilities, were not equipped with enough facilities. This is because the majority of hotels in the study area were one-star and two-star hotels. This result aligned with Mensah's (2006) finding where majority of hotels in Accra, Ghana were not equipped with adequate facilities.

Although, it was also observed that 77.0% of the available facilities were easily accessible. In view of the fact that the facilities were provided for customer usage. This result corroborates the work of Rivera (2004) where the majority of hotel facilities in Costa Rica were easily accessible. Findings also revealed that 57.2% of the available facilities of hotels in the study area were of lesser standards, while only 42.8% of the available facilities were of good standard. This implied that the majority of hotels in the study area are not high-class hotels. This result also aligned with the work of Mensah (2006) who found that the majority of hotel facilities in Accra, Ghana were of lesser standard.

Table 7. Customers' perception of Facility adequacy

Facility adequacy Criteria		Frequency =187	%
Adequacy of electricity and water facilities	Adequate	130	69.5
	Not adequate	57	30.5
Adequacy of bedroom facilities	Adequate	135	72.2
	Not adequate	52	27.8
Availability of check-in and check-out facilities	Available	145	77.5
	Not available	42	22.5
Availability of enough facilities	Available	61	32.6
	Not available	126	67.4
Accessibility to available facilities	Accessible	144	77.0
	Not accessible	43	23.0
Quality of available facilities	Standard	80	42.8
	Sub- Standard	107	57.2

Source: Author's Compilation

CONCLUSION

This study concluded from the perception of hotel users, based on the credibility criteria used, that inadequate facilities, poor condition of available facilities, the high price of goods and services provided and lack of interaction with customers online have a direct effect on the quality performance of hotels in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area. Theoretically, the evaluative criteria used have implications for relevance in determining the extent of service delivery of hotels. Based on the findings of this study and with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction in the hotel industries in the study area, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) should regulate the price of goods and services in the hotel industry to be affordable to both rich and poor customers and come up with policies that will not stifle the industry. Therefore, the management of various classes of hotels in the study area should make provision for adequate facilities of good standard to improve their quality performance.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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ORCID

Umar Usman Jimoh <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1311-8262>