

Availability and Functionality of Safety and Security Equipment in Budget Hotels

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A b s t r a c t

The hotel establishment is known with the characteristics of welcoming people who are willing to pay the required amount for the services rendered and who are in a fit state to be received; irrespective of whom the person is and where he comes from or motive behind the visit. This proves the vulnerability of the hotel industry to security challenges. This study examines the availability and functionality of security equipment in budget hotels. This research was conducted in Bauchi Metropolis using the ten registered budget hotels. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) self-completion questionnaires were distributed to the management and security officers of the selected budget hotels using the random sampling technique. The questionnaires were manually developed distributed and collected. A descriptive analysis was carried out on the data collected and the result presented in charts. It was discovered that budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis have the basic safety and security equipment such as first aid box with 90% availability rate; security lights were available at 96% and mobile locks with 90% availability rate etc. However, some of the equipment were discovered not to be functional; such equipment include Bomb dictator with a functionality level of 21%, scanner scored 35%, smoke dictators were functional only at 30% etc. This is an indication of a poor maintenance level. It was also found that some important security equipment are not used in most budget hotels such as CCTV, heat extractors, bomb blanket etc. It was recommended that a good equipment maintenance culture should be developed by budget hotels to improve the functionality of these equipments.. Also availability and functionality of standard safety and security equipment should form part of the requirement for budget hotel registration.

Keywords: *Budget hotel, Equipment, Safety, Security,*

Background to the Study

The challenges of safety and security are a global one; it is a menace that every region of the world has struggled with. It is an intrinsic aspect of man's need; therefore it remains an important aspect of hotel product and services. The hotel industry has been brought to the lime light owing to recent attacks on some hotels such as in Mubai. The Maslows hierarchy of need places safety and security after the most basic need of food and shelter. It is normal for a guest to be security anxious while on a journey due to the uncertainty associated with it as found in the destination. The vulnerability of guests is high owing to the fact that they are not familiar with the environment and are visitors. Many hotel guests fear to be victims of terrorism, crime, accidents, robbery, kidnap etc. According to the health and apprentice Act of 1902, it should be the duty of every employer to ensure reasonable security and safety measures in their hotel establishment"; it therefore remains the duty of the hotel establishment to ensure the safety and security of its guest. The products of the hospitality industry do not end with food and drinks; safety and security are inherent part of the hospitality products. Safe food offered to the guest, safe and secured environment to sleep, security of the guest data and properties; this is important to achieve customer satisfaction and maintain brand loyalty. A good practices of security and safety in hotel save the business/industry time and money which could be wasted in compensations, hospital bills, court cases, renovations and whole lots of apologies. A hotel that does not maintain the safety and security of its guest is bound to lose its customers, however, to maintain safety and security in the hotel establishment has a high cost implication (Sharma, 2010) and requires the corporation of the employer, employee, the guest and the security agency; the question is, do hotels install and maintain effectively safety and security equipment? The situation of budget hotels is worth investigating being economy in nature and one star which are the smallest class in hotel classification. More so as research has shown that safety and security features differ among hotels by location, price and years of operation (Withiam, 2009).

Research Problem

Singh (2015) noted the sceptic attitude of tourists on safety and security issues within hotel premises due to the rising rate of terrorism. Economic meltdown and terrorist attack has increased emotional and psychological fear of hotel guests (Sharma, 2010). Poor safety and security standards can cause a change of mind on guest decision to booking a particular hotel; in other words lack of safety and insecurity in a hotel facility can cause low patronage. Traditionally, budget hotels are classified as one star hotel with very limited facilities and amenities; often managed by their owners with limited number of staff. The growth of budget hotels in Bauchi State has been tremendous in recent years NTDC (2016). Such growth is usually triggered by the growth in the demand for affordable and comfortable accommodation as a result of increase in budget minded travellers (Bai, Ghselli and Pearson, 2000) considering the country's unstable economic situation, budget hotels have come to stay. However, the ability of these budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis to procure and maintain adequate and functional safety and security equipment is a concern and a gap this research work is set to fill.

Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at assessing the availability and functionality of safety and security equipment in budget hotels; this will be achieved through the following objectives:

1. To investigate the availability of safety and security equipment in budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis.
2. To assess the functionality of safety and security equipment in budget hotels within Bauchi Metropolis.

Research Questions

1. Do budget hotels have safety and security equipment?
2. How functional are the available safety and security equipment in budget hotels?

Literature Review

Charles (2012) defined security as the process or means of preventing or protecting against external or internal dangers. Popescu (2011) has observed the increased safety and security consciousness of hotel guests due to global threats and hazard. It is not arguable that the success of any hospitality or tourism establishment starts with the provision of a safe and secured environment. Therefore safety and security should not be undermined by any hotel establishment but should be top on their priority list (Singh, 2015). More importantly, Hymanson (2013) noted that failure to provide safety and security can tannish the reputation of a hotel and result to financial losses.

Concept of Safety and Security

Enz and Taylor (2002) identified two main aspects of safety and security concept. Whereas safety deals with ways of preventing hotel staff and guest from any harm and injury, security mainly deals with providing protection for guest, customers and their belongings and the hotel system from any event which can cause loss or harm. Kristanti and Kuhu (2005) have defined safety and security as separate concepts; similarly, Sylvest et al (2008) argued that security is dynamic and unforeseen while safety is static and by conducting a risk assessment it could be identified. However, this article argues that safety is an aspect of security. Safety may sound more like internal prevention from harm and security seems broader, but no one talks of security without considering safety. When harm is being prevented it is also a form of protection. Therefore, this paper maintains that safety is an aspect and integral part of security. This argument is buttressed on the opinion of Enz and Taylor (2002) who regarded safety as an essential aspect of security. According to Withiam (2009), Enz further distinguished safety to mean the protection of a guest as a person, while security in addition includes the protection of his property.

There may be some variations in the nature and type of safety and security equipment needed by different hotels due to differences in location, services offered, risk and hazard features, immediate environment and hotel policies; therefore, it is important to engage the services of expert consultants to carry out security audit and develop a security plan to meet safety and security requirement of a hotel.

Hotel safety and Security Equipment

Safety is the condition of not being in danger or of not being in conditions that could lead to injuries, loss of life or property. It could be viewed as the act of ensuring the protection of life and properties within a hotel establishment; this includes the staff and the guest. Though, all risks cannot be evaded, yet, they can be alleviated through rudimentary security techniques and methods. Blake (2014) saw the duty of maintaining safety in the hotel as an indispensable duty of both the employers and employees. Security is a broader sense of safety which does not only protect lives and property within the facility but also vigilantly guide against external attacks and the permeability of any form of crime in to the facility. A three tier frame work proposed by Chiang (2000) considered security in terms of physical system, policies and procedures and personnel training. The physical system recognises hotel security starts from the hotel planning, design and construction of property. The design and construction should allow access to the installation and efficient use of certain security equipment; which include internal and external lighting and fixtures, surveillance equipment and control room, emergency exits etc. An important measure in the physical system is the access system to the guestrooms; this may range from lock and key to electronic key cards. Most high rated hotels have adopted the key card system which has the advantage of recording entries into the room, however most budget hotels may still be at a disadvantage owing to their size and level of operation. The physical system also include installation of security and safety equipment such as CCTV, fire alarm system, smoke detectors, burglary alarm system, warning signs, direction sign posts, safe deposit boxes, panic bolt crash bar, fire extinguishers, first aid box among others. Cleanliness is an important aspect of safety measures in protecting the staff and guest and maintaining good health – providing safe and clean floor to walk on, safe equipment to use, clear gang ways and unobstructed emergency exits, adequate lighting and guest education on safety and security issues. Hotels policies and procedures as regard to security matters should be relevant and implemented to the latter. These policies may include handling of lost keys, issues of theft, loss of guest property use of safe deposit box (Chiang, 2000) etc. Often hotel policies on these issues may involve the security agency depending on the magnitude of the incident. The third frame work comprise of personnel and training. While it is important to update the training of the hotel security personnel, it is equally important that non-security personnel are equally trained on safety and security matters such as how to dictate people with dubious or questionable character, how to prevent crime, confidentiality of guest data, dictating treat and risk, handling situations that could lead to violence, handling of safety equipment (Shang and Mill, 2012). Regular training becomes important to keep crime at its barest minimum.

Safety and Security in Budget Hotels

The vulnerability of hotels to safety and security challenges has been identified by Singh (2014) to constitute the fact that hotels offer high levels of accessibility to the general public. 24 hours on daily basis, hotels welcome strangers for different purposes. Therefore safety and security is a vital issue in hotel services that require priority attention. Implementation of safety and security plans and policies including staff training on safety matters is obviously necessary. Safe accommodation Hotel management studies have discovered that gaps exist in the safety and security equipment found in budget hotels, relatively older hotels and small hotels; contrary to what is obtained in luxury, urban, airport, new and upscale hotels which provides key modern and sophisticated safety and security features (Withiam, 2009). The

presence to these features is not a guaranty of safety and security, but ability to keep them in good working condition and utilise them maximally is important; although lack of them worsens an already challenging situation. Budget hotels ought to look inwards when trying to put up strong a security system. As rightly noted by Sharma (2010) management should constantly train and test hotel staff to maintain high level of vigilance and quick responsiveness in issues of safety and security. Furthermore, he upheld that effort should be made to educate guest about certain safety and security policies and measures operated by the hotel; however, excluding measures that are meant to be kept secret by the hotel. This can be done by placing such information in a prominent place in the guest room, including the information in his key pack, or these measures could be communicated to the guest during the rooming process by a trained bell person.

Methodology

This research was carried out in Bauchi metropolis, targeting budget hotels. The choice of budget hotel was bore out of the fact that must hotels in Bauchi Metropolis are budget hotels; they are low priced hotels that could form hideout for people with dubious and questionable characters. This was revealed by the National Tourism Development Corporation Bauchi (NTDC, 2016). They equally revealed that Bauchi Metropolis has only 10 registered budget Hotels and this forms the target population; therefore the study investigated the 10 registered budget hotels. Using the random sampling technique a total of one hundred and fifty (150) self-completion questionnaires were distributed to the management and security officers of the selected budget hotels. The manual method of administering questionnaires was adopted; this implies that questionnaires were personally distributed and collected. This method has the advantage of ensuring the questionnaires are properly filled; although the respondents could be bias based on the presence of the researcher. Furthermore, a check list was developed and used to investigate the availability and functionality of the security equipment in the chosen hotels. Data obtained was analysed using the following formula; results were presented in charts.

To get the percentage result of the checklist

$$\text{Availability percentage} = \frac{.h}{100}$$

$$\text{Functionality percentage} = \frac{.h}{100}$$

Result Presentation and Discussion

Each of the examined equipment was treated separately and its availability and functionality determined. A number of popular equipment were investigated; these may be considered affordable by the budget hotels. Such equipment include: scanner, bomb detectors, close circuit TV (CCTV), security light, bomb blanket, fire blanket, first aid box, fire alarm, smoke detectors, mobile locks, fire extinguishers, heat extractors, safety and security sign post and emergency exit.

Response Rate

One hundred and fifty questionnaire (150) representing 100% were distributed to ten budget hotels; same number of questionnaire were returned.

Table 1

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Number Distributed	150	100%
Number Returned	150	100%
Valid	150	100%

Source: Field work, 2016

Availability and functionality of security devices - scanner, bomb detectors, CCTV, security lights and bomb blanket

The result in fig 1 revealed the availability of scanner in budget hotels to be 64% while its functionality remains 35%. Bomb detector has the availability rate of 54% and functionality to be 21%. The availability of CCTV rated 36% and out of these 15% is functional. The availability of security lights rated 96% while its functionality rated 90%. 20% of budget hotels have bomb blanket and out of these only 11% is functional.

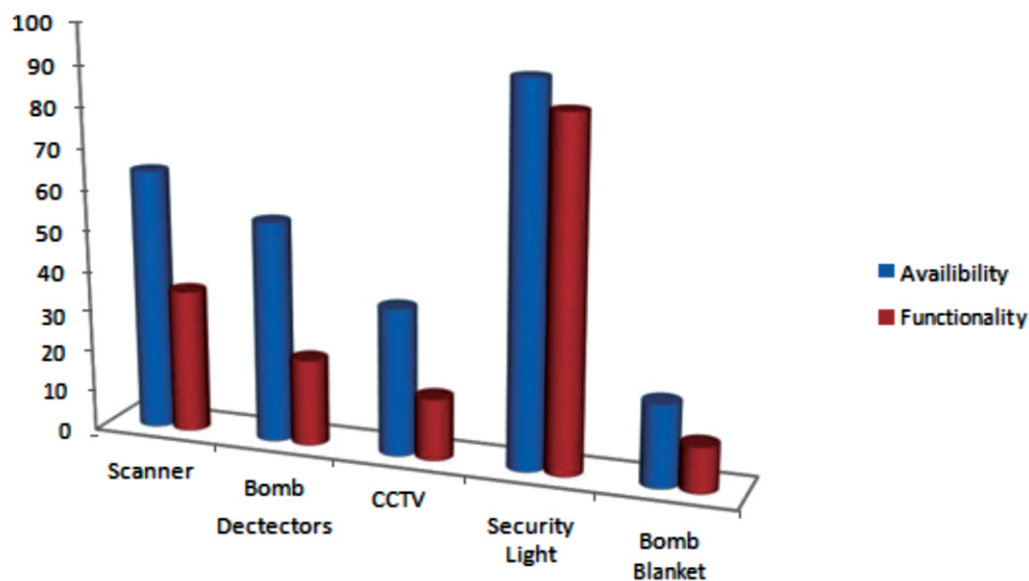


Figure 1: Functionality and Availability of Scanner, Bomb Detectors, CCTV, Security Light and Bomb Blanket

The chart in figure 1 shows that the most common security system available and functional in Budget hotels within Bauchi Metropolis is security light system; rating between 96% availability to 90% functionality. Security lights are large, medium or small light bulbs fixed outside hotel buildings and premises. It could be mounted on the walls, on long standing poles or fixed on the grounds. It serves the purpose of lighting up the hotel premises to a clear view of every happening within and around the hotel premises. Chiang (2000) considered

security lights as rudimentary to Hotel security; similarly, Chan and Lam (2013) found in their research that guests perceive emergency security lighting as important in maintaining security in the hotel. Scanners ranked second revealing an availability level of 64% and functionality level of 34%. Scanners are important security devices used to detect dangerous items on a person or his luggage. It could be fixed on the door or as a hand used device. Going by the security situation in Bauchi State many organisations and offices use this device to check individuals who wish to gain access into their premises. It has become one of the most commonly used security device in Hotels; this explains why it ranks high in availability. However, its functionality level can be considered low based on its popularity; therefore, 34% functionality level indicates that this equipment is poorly maintained and handled by the hotels. Yet, in a research by Chan and Lam (2013), guests perceive regular testing and maintenance system as crucial to sustaining security system in hotels. By implication guest going into the budget hotels may not be scanned jeopardizing the security standard of the hotel. Bomb detector is a security gadget that detects bomb in a building, luggage or vehicle. This is another commonly used security device in Bauchi metropolis. Whereas it scored an average availability rate, however its functionality is quite low; by implication, probably, poor maintenance and poor handling could have resulted to its low rate of functionality. The CCTV is a camera that monitors and records activities within and outside a building. It is a lesser used security system among the budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis; this is evident in its low availability and functionality rate. Budget hotels are smaller hotel that may not afford the installation of expensive equipment like CCTV. However, Chen and Lam (2013) revealed CCTV system for public areas as ranking top on managers list of important security system for hotels. Similarly, bomb blankets are not common in budget hotels as it scored only 20% in availability and 11% in functionality.

Functionality and Availability of Safety Devices - Fire Blanket, First Aid Box, Fire Alarm, Smoke Detectors And Mobile Locks

Generally, safety system and devices performed better than security devices. Fire blanket had the availability rate of 80% and a functionality level of 60%; the availability rate of first aid box is 90% while its functionality level is 60%. Fire alarm scored 70% in availability and 40% in functionality; meanwhile smoke detector had availability rate of 62% and it is 30% functional. Mobile lock was available at 90% and functional at 63% rate. This result indicates that the most common safety devices used in Bauchi Metropolis budget hotels are first aid box and mobile locks; while the least is smoke detector. The implication of the result in figure 2 is that budget hotels give more attention in procuring and maintaining safety equipment than security equipment. This could be due to the fact that safety equipment are more cheaper to procure and maintain than security equipment.

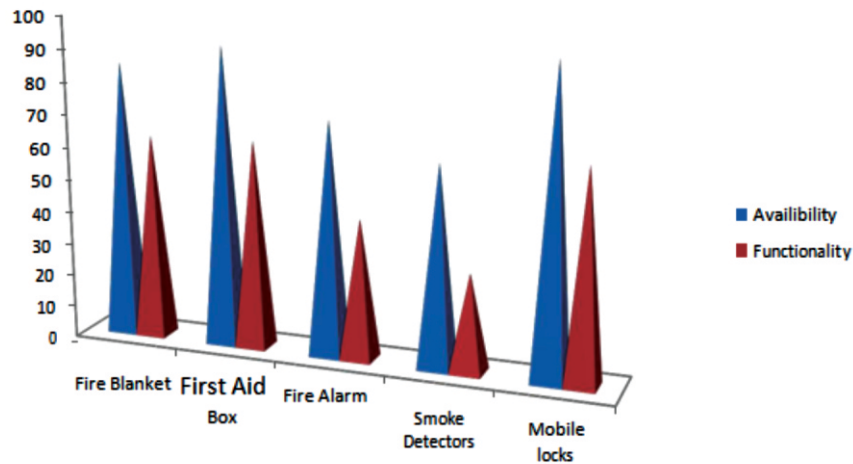


Figure 2: Functionality and Availability of Fire Blanket, First Aid Box, Fire Alarm, Smoke Detectors and Mobile Locks

Mobile locks were the most available and functional safety device in Bauchi budget hotels; they are additional safety device on the key knob of exterior doors where keyed entry is needed. Its inexpensiveness and popularity explains its high rate of availability. Similarly, first aid box showed a high rate of availability and functionality. A first aid box in the hotel is not only a necessity but also a requirement of the food safety regulatory act 1990 for all hotel facility. A first aid box which is a collection and supplies of equipment and drugs for first aid treatment can help to respond executively to common injuries and emergencies that relates to an individual. Whereas 90% of budget hotels have first aid boxes, 70% functionality rate suggests that either most of the available first aid boxes lack adequate standard equipment or facility. Fire blanket is a sheet of flexible material typically woven fiberglass used to smother a fire. It is used to extinguish small incipient fires. 80% availability rate and 60% functionality which is above average, implies that majority of Bauchi Metropolis budget hotels have fire blankets which are functional. However, fire alarm scored a high rate of availability but low in functionality. Fire alarm system is a connection of device installed to warn of dangers of fire through visual and audio appliances by triggering off alarm when fire, smoke or carbon monoxide are present; they are activated through smoke and fire detectors which are situated in the ceilings of rooms, corridors and all public and back of the house areas at intervals. The result indicates that most budget hotels have fire alarm but with a low functional level; this exposes hotels to dangers of fire outbreaks. The inability of budget hotels to keep fire alarms in good working condition is an indication of misplaced priority. Dangers of fire could be despicable, affecting guest, staff and properties that could worth large amount of funds. Sylvest et al (2008) in European Policy Department Economic and Scientific Policy has enlisted functional fire alarm system in its technical guidelines intended to safeguard hotel guest.

Functionality and Availability of Safety Devices - Fire Extinguisher, Heat Extractors, Safety and Security Sign Post and Emergency Exits

Fire extinguisher, heat extractors, safety and security sign post and emergency exits are very common and basic safety devices used in the hotel industry, every hotel establishment ought to put in place these simple safety devices. Based on the findings fire extinguishers was found available in budget hotels at 90% and functional at 50%. Safety and security signpost has the availability and functionality rate at 80%; while emergency exits scored 55% in both availability and functionality. Heat extractors were available at 10% and functionality at 2%. This result implies that most budget hotels have fire extinguishers in place; in line with this finding, Chen and Lam (2013)'s study discovered well-equipped fire prevention system as basic to hotel safety system. However, the functionality level of these fire extinguishers is at average. Meanwhile safety and security devices and emergency exits maintain equal availability and functionality rate. Heat extractors are less popularly used in budget hotels.

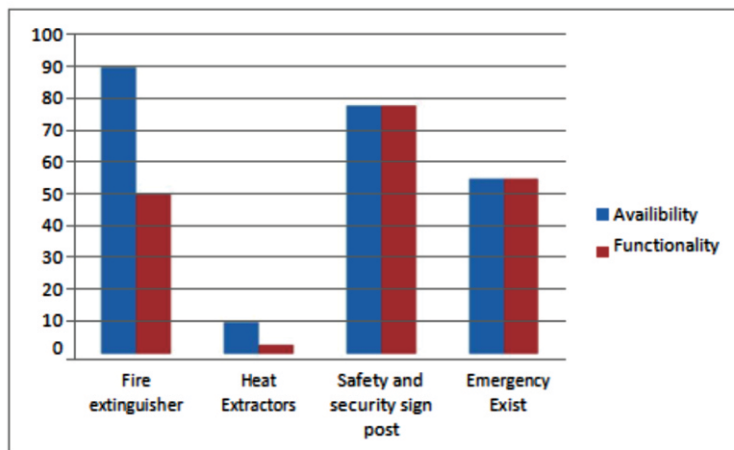


Figure 3: Functionality and Availability of Fire Extinguisher, Heat Extractors, Safety and Security Sign Post and Emergency Exits

Fire extinguisher is a fire fighting equipment that comes in different types and colours, such as red, blue, cream and black. They are used to put off different classes of fire according to their colours. Fire extinguishers are one of the basic safety equipment used in the hotel establishment due to high probability of fire outbreaks. However they are to be serviced regularly without which they will not be functional. The result reveals that almost all the budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis have fire extinguishers yet it functionality level is at average. By implication in the event of fire budget hotels may run into difficulty managing such a situation. Furthermore, the safety regulation act 1990 requires every hotel establishment to install different types of fire extinguishers. Similarly, Sylvest et al (2008) in European Union technical guidelines for hotels recommended functional fire-fighting equipment as important in ensuring hotel safety. Safety and security sign posts revealed high equal level of availability and functionality. In other words these signposts are highly available and functional in Bauchi Metropolis budget hotels. Each room should display a plan of the escape routes and emergency; safety signs should be visible and legible. Emergency exits scored above average, this is an indication that most budget hotels are constructed with the provision of emergency exits. Safe escape routes are of great importance in hotels for free

passage of persons in the event of fires or other emergencies as recommended by Sylvest et al (2008). Poor performance of heat extractors indicates they are not available (5%) in most budget hotels and where they are available, most are not functional (2%). However, heat extractors are important kitchen equipment that ensures the safety of staff by extracting heat and smoke from the kitchen to maintain good temperature. Lack of heat extractors in the kitchen exposes the staff to great danger of choking, fatigue, dehydration etc.

Conclusion

This study examined the availability and the functionality of safety and security equipment in Bauchi Metropolis budget hotels. Ten registered budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis were used as the study sample; using questionnaire to sample 150 personnel. This study is timely, going by the recent security situation in Nigeria especially the North-Eastern part. Generally, this research discovered that budget hotels in Bauchi Metropolis have basic safety and security equipment; however, their functionality level is very poor. Most of these equipment are not functional due to lack of maintenance and services. The most available and functional equipment are fire extinguishers, safety and security sign posts, mobile locks and security lights. However the least available and functional are heat extractors, smoke detectors, bomb blankets and CCTV.

Recommendations

- I. It is recommended that budget hotels should step up to standard by introducing more sophisticated safety and security equipment in their establishments.
- ii. The existing basic equipment should always be maintained and serviced to have a high functionality level.
- iii. Hotel staff should be trained periodically on the use of safety and security equipment and how to handle properly to extend their life span.
- iv. Policy makers should insist on availability and functionality of safety and security equipment as part of standard requirement for hotel registration.
- v. Proper supervision and checks when being carried out on hotel standard should include checks on safety and security equipment.

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